

10909. bbb. 24



*This an Original picture presented by herself to the Courtiers of Standards.
Engraved by Hogwood.*

Ninon de l'Enclos.

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Ninon de l'Enclos.

J. Hapgood

T H E
M E M O I R S
O F

NINON DE L'ENCLOS:

With her LETTERS to

MONS^R. DE ST. EVREMOND,

AND TO THE

Marquis de Sevigné.

Collected and Translated from the FRENCH,

BY A L A D Y.

I N T W O V O L U M E S.

V O L. I.

Donec erunt ignes, arcusque cupidinis arma,
Discentur numeri, culte Tibulle, tui.

Ov. de Art. Am. Lib. 1.

L O N D O N:

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M. DCC. LXXVI.



T O
H E R G R A C E
The Duchess of Bedford.

May it please your Grace,

I AM aware of the surprize you must be in at seeing a work addressed to you, without your consent, without your knowledge, or perhaps your having ever heard of the book which I here present you with.

All writers propose doing honour to their works, by dedicating them to some great personage; no one can have this motive more in view than I, when I take the liberty of addressing this volume to your Grace. But though I am certain that your patronage, like the stamp on coin,

A 2 will

iv DEDICATION.

will at once render it current, and cover its allay, I frankly confess that I am actuated by some other inducements ; the first and strongest of which is, the pride and pleasure I am sensible of, in proclaiming the sincere gratitude and high respect I owe to the Duchess of Bedford.

I present you, Madam, with the produce of my leisure, as the antients were wont to bequeath their unportioned orphans to the noblest and most generous of their patrons ; and as your Grace's character has already declared you possessed of their other excellencies, I will not doubt your kind adoption of this little founding, sent into the world without a *name*, or any merit but what it may be intitled to from *Your's*.

Another

DEDICATION. v

Another reason for stealing this address upon you was, that if I had been prevented from presenting this book to your Grace, I should have lost the advantage of the justification which I promise myself, upon publishing this work ; as the world may be well assured I do not imagine there is any thing in these writings that can offend the most reserved ear, when I venture to present them first to a person whose character and station so justly intitle her to the highest and nicest respect.

As I tremble at the apprehension of appearing in print without a mask, I shall not subscribe my name to this address, and am very certain that I may still remain concealed amidst a crowd, tho' I confess myself to be one

vi DEDICATION.

of those, to whom your Grace's generosity and benevolence have given just reason of declaring themselves, as I have the honour of doing at present,

May it please your GRACE,

Your GRACE's much obliged,

most grateful, most humble,

and obedient Servant,

The TRANSLATOR.

To

To Mrs. - - - - ,

Upon reading this Work.

WHILST Ninon's spirit kindles all love's fire,
Thy moral chastens every loose desire.

Thy regulated passion, void of blame,

Warms without scorching, like the vestal flame.

I trembled for you as I read along,

But found your reason cool, your virtue strong :

With such address the dangerous theme you treat,

As must the libertine's free hopes defeat :

Thy wit th' albesto's property obtains,

Which from the hottest fire a pureness gains.

Like Emma's too, thy chastity appears,

Who rang'd unhurt, amidst the burning shores.

T H E I N T R O D U C T I O N.

IN a weekly paper, lately published, filed *THE WORLD*, (Numb. 28) I met with the following extraordinary passage. Speaking of the famous Ninon de l'Enclos, he says, "It was in her fifty-sixth year, that the Chevalier de Villiers, a natural son whom she had by the Count de Gerze, arrived at Paris from the provinces, where he had been educated without any knowledge of his real parents. He saw his mother—He fell in love with her. The increase, the vehemence of his passion, gave the greatest disquiet to the affectionate matron. At last, when nothing but a discovery of the secret could put a stop to the impetuosity of his attempts, she carried him into her bed-chamber, and pointing to a clock, cried, *Rash youth, look there! at that hour, two and twenty years ago, I*
" was

x INTRODUCTION.

“ *was delivered of you in this very bed !* It is
“ a certain fact, that the unfortunate, a-
“ bashed young man, flew into the gar-
“ den, and fell upon his sword.

“ This catastrophe had like to have de-
“ prived the age of the most accomplished
“ mistress that ever adorned the Cytherean
“ annals. It was above twenty years be-
“ fore the afflicted mother would listen to
“ any addresses of a tender nature. At
“ length, the polite Abbé de Gedeoine
“ pressed and obtained an assignation.
“ He came, and found the enchanting
“ Ninon reclining on a couch, like the
“ *Grandmother* of the *Loves*, in the most
“ galant deshabille. He asked her, but
“ with the greatest air of respect, why she
“ had so long deferred the completion of
“ his happiness ? I must confess, replied
“ she, it proceeded from a remain of va-
“ nity : I piqued myself upon having a
“ lover at fourscore, and it was but yester-
“ day that I was eighty compleat.”

This

INTRODUCTION. — xi

This extract naturally raised my curiosity to inquire a little farther after so extraordinary a woman; and I found out that she lived in the reign of Lewis the fourteenth, and held a correspondence with Monsieur de Saint Evremond, during his exile in England. Some of her letters are among his works, and others I have met with elsewhere; both of which I here present the reader with; and shall add St. Evremond's letters in this correspondence, as they may serve to illustrate hers, and will prove an additional entertainment to the public.

But first, I must premise a hint, that if any one should take the trouble of comparing these pages with the original ones, they may, perhaps, discover a method of translating, quite new; about which I beg to have the opinion of the *Literati*. Chance or necessity have sometimes produced good things; among which, very possibly, this may

xii INTRODUCTION.

may happen to be one; that not being perfect *mistress* of the French idiom, I was obliged to read the letters frequently over, in order to catch the spirit of the writers; which I have endeavoured to convey to the readers, in such a free manner as one tells a story, or repeats a conversation; by imitating the humour, or expressing the sentiment, though not in the same literal way they received it.

Need I make any apology for leaving out passages, that I did not think would entertain; or for bringing two sentences together, which were separate in the original, when I imagined they might reflect mutual light on each other, by being joined in the same paragraph?

LETTERS

LETTERS

BETWEEN

NINON and ST. EVREMOND.

NINON.

MONSIEUR de Charleval is just dead; at which I am so much afflicted, that I endeavour to console myself by considering the part you will take in my grief. I visited him every day: his mind had all the charms of youth, and his heart every tenderness and goodness that could be requisite in a sincere friend.

VOL. I.

B

He.

He often spoke of you, and of all the original wits of our time. His life, and that I lead at present, had a great deal of resemblance. In fine, such a loss is worse than death itself.

Pray let me hear from you. I am as much concerned about your welfare at London, as if you were still at Paris. Old friends have charms, which are never so well known, as when we are deprived of them.

Adieu.

XX

N I N O N.

I WAS alone in my apartment, and quite tired with reading, when a servant came and told me there was a gentleman below, who came from Monsieur de St. Evremond. You may conclude that all my weariness was immediately shaken off;

NINON AND ST. EVREMOND. 3.

off; I had the pleasure of talking of you, and was thereby informed of little particulars, that letters cannot so well acquaint us with. He gave me an account of your perfect health, and the manner of your spending your time. The liveliness of your wit shews the effect of both; and your letters flatter me that England has forty years more of life in store for you. I think it is there only, that they speak of people who have outlived the age of man. I could have wished to pass the remainder of my life with you; and had you thought as I do, you would have been in this country ere now^a. However, it is very agreeable to recollect those persons we have loved; and perhaps this separation of our persons

B 2

sons

^a He had been banished from France on account of an humourous satire he had written against Cardinal Mazarin. After the death of the Cardinal he had leave to return, but declined it.

4 LETTERS BETWEEN

sons has been made to embellish my epitaph.^b

I wish your young divine had found me in *the glory of Niquée*,^c where people never suffer any change; for I believe you think me one of the persons enchanted in it. Do not alter your opinion in this matter, which has been always favourable to me, and let this kind of intercourse, that some philosophers think better than presence, continue to our life's end.

I told the Abbé Turetin, that I should be pleased to do him any manner of service. He has already become acquainted with some of my friends here, who have found him worthy of the character

^b She means that the duration and constancy of her friendship for St. Evremond, might be numbered among the merits of her elegy. He says as much himself, in the last paragraph of the second Letter following.

^c See Amadis de Gaul.

NINON AND ST. EVREMOND. 5

rafter you have given him. If he has a mind to converse with the honest abbots, who remain here in the absence of the court, he shall be received as a man whom you esteem. I read your letter before him with spectacles on; but they do not ill become me, for I had always a grave mien, If he is enamoured of that sort of merit, that is here stiled *distinguished*, perhaps your wish may be accomplished; for they endeavour to comfort me every day, for my losses, by this flattering expression!

You wish la Fontaine in England. We have but little of his company at Paris. His understanding is much impaired. This is the fate of poets. Lucretius and Tasso were examples of it. I believe however, that there has not been any philtres given to him, for he had not much commerce with women who could afford the expence of them.

Adieu.

B. 3

St.

ST. EVREMOND.

MONSIEUR Turetin is extremely obliged to me for introducing him to your acquaintance; and I am also obliged to him for giving occasion to the agreeable letter I have just received from you.

I do not doubt but he found you with the same eyes that I formerly so much admired in you; those eyes by which I could always perceive the conquest of a new lover, when they used to sparkle more than usual.

You are still the same to me; and though time, that ravager of all things, should have exerted its utmost effort to demolish your beauty, my imagination will always supply the *glory of Niquée* to you. I am very sure that with regard to your eyes and teeth, you have no occasion
for

NINON AND ST. EVREMOND. 7

for it. What you stand most in need of in my judgment, is to comprehend thoroughly the advantages of your sense and apprehension, which seem to improve every Day. In short, you have at present more wit and vivacity, than even the young and sprightly Ninon ever had.

Adieu.

XX

ST. EVREMOND.

I HAVE received your second letter: it is obliging, agreeable, and full of wit. I perceive in it at once, the humour of Ninon, and the good sense of Madame de L'Enclos. I know how the former lived, and I learn from you after what manner the other passes her time. Every thing contributes to make me regret the happy days I have enjoyed in your company, and to desire, in vain, to behold you once more! I have not strength enough to trans-

B 4.

port

8 LETTERS BETWEEN

port myself over to France, and you have attachments there, which will prevent you from coming to England. The Dutches of Bouillon can inform you that England has its charms; and I should be ungrateful myself, if I did not acknowledge that I had met with satisfaction and pleasure in it.

I am glad to hear that the Count de Grammont has recovered his former health, and acquired a new devotion. Hitherto I have been contented with being a good sort of a plain, honest man; but I must do something more now, and only wait for your example to become godly. You live in a country where people have extraordinary advantages toward saving their souls. There, vice is almost as much against the fashion, as against virtue: sinning passes for ill-breeding; shocks decency, and offends good manners, as much as religion. Formerly, it sufficed to be wicked. But

at

at present one must be a scoundrel, to be damned in France. They who have not regard enough for another life, are led to salvation by the considerations and duties of this.

But enough, upon a subject in which the conversation of the Count de Grammont has engaged me. I believe it to be sincere and honest. It well becomes a man

B 5

who

*The *Aera* here pointed out, was the meridian of Madame de Maintenon's power: who by her single virtue, through her influence over Lewis the Fourteenth, reclaimed a debauched monarch, and a licentious court. This passage in St. Evremond, is a most admirable description of that happy state of morals and manners to which the powerful example of crowned heads may reform a nation! I shall not dispute *in Politics*, the preference of monarchy over other forms of government; but *in Virtue*, its advantages are as much superior, as example is to precept. Or, higher still, as the gospel to philosophy. "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings! Be learned, ye that are judges of the earth." Psalms.

who is no longer young, to forget that he ever had been so. This is, however, what I could never yet arrive at. On the contrary, from the remembrance of my younger years, and recollection of past vivacity, I endeavour to animate and rouse up the sluggishness of age.

What I find most to be regretted at this period, is, that hope is fled! Hope, the sweetest passion of the soul, and which so kindly supplies the absence of every other enjoyment of life! What renders me most uneasy at present, is my despairing ever to see you again. I must compound then for the pleasure of writing to you sometimes, in order to keep up a friendship that has yet withstood length of time, distance of place, and the usual coldness of old age. This last expression alludes to myself only; for nature will begin with you, to shew that it is possible not to grow old. Adieu.

NINON.

N I N O N.

I LEARN with pleasure that my soul is dearer to you than my body; and that your good sense leads you always to what is best. In truth, the latter deserves no farther regard; but, the former has yet some glimmering light that supports, and touches it sensibly, at the remembrance of a friend, whose lineaments, absence has not been able to efface.

I often tell old stories, in which Monsieur d'Elbene, de Charleval, and the Chevalier de Riviere, have done honour to the moderns. You are also spoken of with advantage upon these occasions; but I am silent on this head, before the members of the French Academy, who have declared for the antients.*

B 6

I hear

* There was a curious criticism about that time, among the Literati of France, whether the antients or moderns

I hear of a prologue set to music, which I long to see performed upon our theatre. The beauty, who is the subject of it, would raise the envy of the whole audience. All our Helens have not the fortune to be celebrated by a Homer, and ranked among the goddesses of beauty. I have now got very high.—How shall I descend again? My dear Friend, ought we not to suffer the heart to speak its own language? The Dutchess of Bouillon looks as if she was but eighteen: the spring of beauty runs through the blood of the Mazarins.

Now

modems were superior in point of genius. Fontenelle wrote an Essay on this subject, replete with wit and good sense. He determines, like a true philosopher, that nature has been always favourable in her productions; consequently, the capacities of mankind at all times the same. He humourously asks the *Fauteurs* of Antiquity, whether the trees were taller in those days, than at present?

* She speaks this in opposition to figurative or poetic manners of expression.

Now our kings are friends, would you not do well to take a trip hither? This would be to me the greatest blessing of the peace. Adieu, and be assured that I still love you more tenderly, than philosophy admits of.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

ST. EVREMOND.

I HAVE a sensible pleasure in beholding young, handsome and blooming persons, who are capable of raising any sort of emotion in a heart so old as mine. As there has always been a great resemblance between our tastes, humours, and sentiments, I think you will not be displeased to see a young nobleman who has had the merit and address of rendering himself agreeable to all the ladies on our side of the water. I have therefore desired the Duke of St. Alban's to visit you, as much for his own satisfaction, as for yours.

Pray

Pray let me know how our old friend de Gourville does; and prithee, use your interest with him to send me some good wine. I lodge with Monsieur de l'Hermitage, one of his relations, a very honest man, who fled hither, on account of religion. It was unlucky for him that the consciences of the French catholics would not suffer him to stay in his own country, or that the scrupulousness of his own, obliged him to leave it. He certainly deserves the esteem of his cousin.

If there come over with Mareschal Tallard, any of your friends, of the merit of our time, to whom I can render any manner of service, I pray you command me.

The Countess of Sandwich is going to France, for her health. The late Earl of Rochester, her father, had more wit than any man in England: she has more wit than her father, as much generosity as wit,
and

and is every other way as amiable as she is liberal and ingenious.

Doctor Morelli, my particular friend, accompanies her. Prithce facilitate his acquaintance with all your celebrated Genii. If he has yours, I esteem him sufficiently happy. You cannot introduce him to any person of so singular a merit as yourself.^g

* * * * *

I think that Epicurus made one part of his *chief good* to consist in the remembrance of things past. There is no *Summum Bonum* for a man of a hundred years old like me.^h But there are still some comforts left; and that

* Here St. Evremond enters into a long detail of the Doctor's character; but as it had no relation to this correspondence, I have thought proper to leave out the passage.

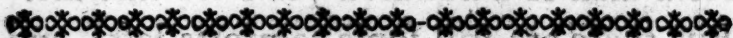
^h He speaks figuratively; as he was then near ninety.

16 LETTERS BETWEEN

that of remembering you, and all that I have heard you say, is one of my greatest.

I write a great many things that you will not much attend to; nor do I really consider whether they may be tedious to you, or no. 'Tis enough that I amuse myself at this age. I have not the presumption to imagine I can be capable of pleasing others. My sole merit is to be able to content myself; and I am very happy in being still capable of doing so, by writing to you.

Adieu.



N I N O N.

HOW came you to imagine that the sight of a young man would be agreeable to me? You judge, I suppose, of other people's sentiments by your own: but, I have forgot every thing now, except

cept my friends; and if the title of *Doflor*, had not given me courage, your English folks fhould never have heard a word from me.

My porter told them I was not at home, and took your letter, which gave me as much pleasure as any I had ever received from you. How defirous you are of having good wine, and how unhappy am I that cannot accommodate you! Monsieur de l'Hermitage could tell you as well as I, that de Gourville does not ftir out of his chamber. He is pretty much indifferent about all manner of taftes. A good friend ftill: but people never think of employing him, for fear of giving him trouble. However, if upon any opportunity that I do not forefee, I can ufe my addrefs for the wine, you may depend upon me.

Marefchal Tallard was formerly one of my friends; but great affairs make great men

men negligent of things that are useless to them. I am told that the Abbé du Bois will go over with him: he is a little, lively man, that I fancy will please you.

I have twenty of your letters in my possession. They are read here with great applause. You see that a good taste is not quite extinct in France. I was charmed at that part of your last, where you are not much concerned about being tiresome; and in truth, you are wise if you are henceforward only concerned about yourself. Not but that the opinion is false, with regard to you, "That you are no longer capable of "pleasing others."

Farewel.

Str.

ST. EVREMOND.

YOUR life, my dear friend, has been too illustrious not to be continued uniformly to the end. Let not La Rochefaucault's hell alarm you.^a It was a premeditated one, that he wanted to make a sentiment of. Pronounce then, the word *Love*, boldly; but never suffer that of *Old Age*, to slip out of your lips. There is so much spirit in your letter, that there is not the least room to imagine you even at the beginning of a decline. What ingratitude then, to become ashamed of that charming passion, to which you are indebted, both for your merit and your pleasures? Acknowledge all your passions, to give the full merit to all your virtues.

However, you have expressed but one half of your character.—Nothing can be better

^a He stiled *Old Age* the hell of women.

better than that part which relates to your friends: nothing more flat than what regards your lovers. I shall draw your picture at full length, in a few lines; and please to accept it here, framed out of all the qualities that you either have, or ever did possess.

Fickle in love, in friendship still sincere;
 Love has her transports; friendship virtues rare:
 Indulgent Nature has to Ninon given
 Two characters, befitting Earth or Heaven;
 Epicurean taste to revel here,
 And Cato's virtues to insure her there.^b

Adieu.

^b The French verses contain twenty lines; but as there is but one thought in them span out by repetitions, I have only translated the six last, in which the whole spirit of the Epigram consists.

The Sterling *Bullion* of one English line,
 Drawn to *French wire*, would through whole
 pages shine.

POPE.

ST

ST. EVREMOND.

I HAVE been enquiring after you, from all the world, for these twelve months past, and could not receive any manner of information. At length, Monsieur de la Bastide gave me some account of you. He says that you are well, and that tho' you have not now so many lovers, as formerly, you seem perfectly contented with having preserved a great number of friends.

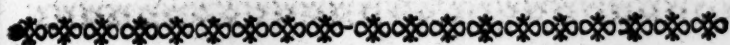
The improbability of this last article, makes me doubt the truth of the former. You were born to love all the days of your life. There is a resemblance between lovers and gamesters: *Whoever has loved, will always love.* If I had been told that you had become devout, I might have believed it; for this is passing, from a human

human passion, to a divine one; 'tis still supplying employment for the soul; but not to love, is a kind of annihilation; which can never suit with the natural frame of your mind.

I beg you will inform me of your health, your temper and your occupations; and this in a very long letter, that must contain but little morality, and a great deal of affection for your old friend. As for news, relating to peace or war, I ask you none: I neither write any thing of that kind myself, nor do I care to receive any.

Adieu. The truest and most affectionate of your humble servants would gain much by your having no lovers; for he would then be the first of your friends, in spite of an absence that we may call eternal.

NINON.



N I N O N.

I DARE say that Dulcinea never recollected her Chevalier with more pleasure. Your letter was received as it deserved; and the *sorrowful countenance* did not in the least diminish the merit of your sentiments. I feel a fond pleasure at their vigour and continuance—preserve them, to the confusion of dotage.

I agree with you that wrinkles are shrewd signs of wisdom; and am pleased to find that your *exterior* merits have not lowered your spirits. I endeavour myself at the same philosophy!

Adieu.

* He used to sign some of his letters to L'Enclos, in his old age, *The Knight of the sorrowful Countenance*; from a character in Don Quixote.

NINON.



N I N O N.

I HAVE sent an answer to your last letter, to the Abbè du Bois' correspondent; but he being at Versailles, I am afraid that it was not delivered to him. I should have been very uneasy about your health, if I had not received a visit from Madame de Bouillon's good little Librarian, who gave me extreme pleasure by shewing me a letter concerning you, from a person who thinks of me, upon your account.^d Whatever reason I had in my sickness, to be thankful to my friends and the world, I have met with nothing that affected me with a more lively sense, than that mark of kindness. Do in this matter, all that you are obliged to, since it is owing merely to you that I have received this favour.

How

^d The Dutches of Mazarin, who lived then in England.

How do I envy those who go to England! and how delighted should I be to dine with you once more! Is there not something gross and mean in mentioning a dinner? The mind has great advantages over the body: however in return, this same vulgar mechanism often furnishes certain relishes, that help to relieve the soul from uneasy reflections. You have sometimes laughed at those I used to make: I have now banished them all: 'tis too late for them at our period of life: we ought to content ourselves with the day in which we live. Near hopes, whatever philosophers may say, are as much to be prized, as those that are farther extended—for they are more certain.

Here is fine morality for you! I wish you good health, for that is the point to which every thing should tend.

Adieu.

VOL. I.

C

NINON.

N I N O N.

THE Abbe du Bois delivered me your letter, and spoke as well of your appetite, as of your intellects. There is a certain time of life, when we value a good stomach more than the understanding; and I confess to my shame, that I deem you happier in enjoying the one than the other. I always thought that your judgment would be as long-lived as yourself; but we cannot be so certain of the health of the body; without which there is nothing left but sad reflections. I find myself insensibly falling into them, but I shall immediately turn to another subject.

It relates to a pretty young man, whom the desire of seeing persons of the best note in all countries, has tempted to break away from his family, without waiting for their consent. Perhaps you may blame his

NINON AND ST. EVREMOND. 27

his too early curiosity; but the thing is done. He knows many things, and is ignorant of others that one of his age ought not to know. I thought him worthy of paying his respects to you, in order to make him sensible that he has not lost his time by going to England. I have spoken likewise to his eldest brother, who is my particular friend, to direct him to wait on the Dutchess of Mazarin, and Lady Harvey, since they have been pleased to remember me.

ST. EVREMOND.

YOUR letter has a great deal of good sense in it. You praise the stomach to so much advantage, that henceforth it will be a shame to have a good understanding, without a good appetite at the same time. I am obliged to the Abbe duBois, for hav-

ing gained me your esteem, by this favourable character. At eighty-eight years of age I eat oysters every Morning; I dine heartily, and sup tolerably—Heroes have been celebrated for less merit than mine.

When I was young, I admired nothing but the pleasures of the mind; being more indifferent about the concerns of the body, than I ought to have been. Now, I make amends as much as possible, for my former partiality, either by the indulgences I give, or the esteem and friendship I have lately conceived for it.

Your method was quite the reverse; you had some concern for the body, in your youth: at present, you are occupied only about what relates to the mind. I know not whether you have reason to value it so much as you do. For my part, I can
scarce

scarce read any thing worth retaining, and hardly hear any thing worth listening to. How difficult soever the intellects are at my age, the impressions that agreeable objects make upon my senses, affect me still: and we are much in the wrong to take such pains to mortify them. It is perhaps a jealousy of the mind, that looks upon their lot to be better than its own.

Monsieur Bernier, who was the prettiest philosopher I ever know, (*pretty philosopher* is an odd expression, but his figure, his stature, his manner and conversation, gave him a just title to this epithet) Monsieur Bernier, I say, speaking of the mortification of the senses, said to me one day, “ I will let you into a secret, with which
“ I would not intrust Madame de la Sab-
“ lierre, nor even Mademoiselle de l’En-
“ clos, whom I take to be of a superior
“ kind; but I tell it to you in confidence,

"that *abstinence from pleasure appears to me to be a great sin.*"^c I was surprized at the novelty of this system. It left, however, some impression upon me. If he had continued his lecture, perhaps he might have given me a thorough taste for his doctrine.

Continue your friendship to me; which has never been impaired. A rare thing in so long a commerce as ours. Adieu.

^c This *pretty philosopher* speaks on the epicurean principle; or rather, like a libertine, without any principle at all, as his doctrine is quite repugnant to the orthodoxy of his own church, which enjoins fasts, penances and mortifications. Had he admitted an exception against *evil* pleasures, his sentiment would not only have been more philosophic, but agreeable also to the most rational christianity.

The blessings thy free bounty gives,

Let me not cast away;

For God is paid, when man receives;

T' enjoy, is to obey. *Pope's Univ. Prayer.*

N I N O N.

N I N O N.

THE Count de Clerembaut gave me a sensible pleasure by telling me that you remember me, which I really deserve, on account of my constant affection for you. We two shall merit the admiration of posterity for the duration of our lives, and that of our friendship. I fancy I shall live as long as you, but am often weary with doing continually the same thing; and I commend the Swiss, who drowned himself for that single reason.

My friends sometimes check me on this score; and assure me that life is desirable while it is attended with tranquility and a sound mind. Vigour of body gives us other sentiments, one would prefer that to vigour of mind; but what signifies it when one cannot make the exchange? and 'tis

as good to avoid reflections as make those which are of no use.

Lady Sandwich has given me a thousand satisfactions in the happiness I have of pleasing her. I did not imagine that at my time of life, I could render myself an agreeable companion to a woman of her age. She has more wit than all the women in France, and more true merit too. She is going to leave us, which gives concern to every one who knows her here, but most particularly to me. Had you been here, we should have made entertainments worthy of the antients.

The Count de Grammont is grown so young again, that I think him as lively as when he hated sick people, and loved them when they had recovered their health. You have wedded me to the Dutchess of Mazarin; and I cannot hear of her welfare without pleasure.

Love

Love me always. *Adieu*. But why don't we say, *Good-morrow*? We ought not to die without seeing one another.

N I N O N.

WHAT a loss have you sustained! If we were not to be lost ourselves, it would be impossible for us ever to be comforted. I heartily condole with you. You are deprived of an amiable friend, whose converse supported your spirits in exile. How is such a misfortune to be retrieved? The loss of friends is a tax on age! Philosophy must be your only resource now! I am as much affected at her death, as if I had the honour of the Dutchess of Mazarin's acquaintance. She thought of me in my sufferings; I was touched with that goodness; and her being so dear to you, made me love and esteem her still more.

C 5

There

There is no remedy for this misfortune; nor is there any against those that happen to our own poor bodies. Take care of yours : your friends are rejoiced to see you so healthy—and so wise, for I reckon those only wise, who know how to render themselves happy.

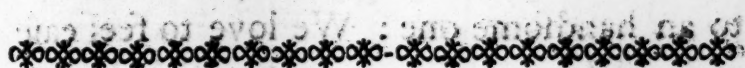
I return you many thanks for the tea you were pleased to send me : The humour and gaiety of your letter pleased me still more than the present.

You will soon have Lady Sandwich with you again, whom we behold with great regret just on the eve of her departure.* I wish that her way of life may afford you some consolation. I don't know the English manner, but this lady has been perfectly French among us.

* She died lately in France in a very advanced age.

Adieu

Adieu Sir, a thousand times. If one could think like Madame de Chevreuse, who fancied when she was dying, that *she was going to chat with her friends in the other world*, one might receive some comfort from such a thought.



N I N O N.

YOUR letter has filled my mind with impossible wishes, which I did not think myself any longer capable of. "The days pass away," as good Des Yvetaux used to say, "in ignorance and idleness; yet unhappily, these same days are imputed to account, and swallow up both the persons and things that we are most attached to." You have experienced this last particular in a severe manner. You formerly said, *that I should die of nothing but reflections*. I endeavour to avoid making

any more, and to forget to-morrow the time I have lived to-day. Every one tells me that I have less reason to complain of time than any body; but be this as it may, if any body had proposed such a life to me formerly, I should have hanged myself first. Yet we cling to an ugly body as much as to an handsome one: We love to feel ease and rest.²

I have still a pretty good appetite: I wish heartily that I had an opportunity of

² Behold the miserable condition of old age! Tired to stay, yet loth to go! With sense, wit, philosophy, beauty, admiration, lovers, friends, health and fortune, if the happy Ninon de l'Enclos was reduced to such a state, what a wretchedness must it be to all the rest of the world, to survive to her years? No patience, but that of a christian, can be sufficient to support the wearied soul through such an unvaried journey. And can any thing shew the peculiar excellence, the divine temperament of our religion, more than this, that while it makes us most wish to go, leaves us best contented to stay?

trying

trying it with yours, and of talking about all the original characters we have known; the remembrance of whom rejoiceth me more than the presence of a great many people that I every day converse with.

Monsieur de Clerembaut often asks me whether he resembles his father as to his parts? I tell him, No—But I hope from his self-sufficiency, that he accepts this negative in his favour: and perhaps, some people may think so. What comparison between this age, and that we have seen!

You will soon see Lady Sandwich; but I am afraid that she goes into the country. She knows all that you think of her. She will tell you more news of the country than I can do. She has examined and founded every thing to the bottom. She perfectly knows all my haunts; and has found the way not to be a stranger here. Adieu.

St.

THE last letter I receive from Madame de l'Enclos always appears to me the best; and this is not because the sense of the present pleasure prevails over the remembrance of the past; but the true reason is, that your mind receives new vigour and improvement every day. If it be with your health as with your understanding, I shall but ill maintain the challenge you propose, on the best appetite. I made trial of mine against Lady Sandwich at an entertainment the other day at Lord Jersey's, and was not worsted. Her ladyship's wit is acknowledged by all the world, and her good taste is manifest by the extraordinary esteem she expresses for you. She did not get the better of me in praising you, any more than in eating.

You are of all countries; as much esteemed at London, as at Paris. You are
of

of all times; and when I alledge you for the honour of mine, the young immediately name you to give the same advantage to theirs. Thus are you mistress both of the past and present: I wish with all my soul, that you may yet extend your power considerably over the future! It is not fame I have here in view; that is sufficiently secured to you already: I am thinking of what is more essential, namely life; of which eight days are more worth than eight centuries of glory after death.

“ If any one had proposed such a life to
 “ you formerly, you would have hanged
 “ yourself first.” This expression charms me—And yet, you content yourself with *ease and rest*, after having tasted the most lively pleasures. There is not any one who sets a greater value on youth than I; and as I have nothing of it but the remembrance only, I follow your example, and
 make

make the most of the current minutes that I can. Would to Heaven that the Dutchess of Mazarin had been of our mind! She would then have been still alive. But she would needs die the greatest beauty in the world.^a

Live—For life is good, while it is free from pain. Farewel.



N I N O N.

WIT is a dangerous talent in friendship. Your letter would have undone any one but myself. I know your lively and surprising imagination, and yet was obliged to recollect that Lucian had written in praise of a fly, in order to render your stile familiar to me. Would to Heaven that you really thought of me as you

^a She used cosmetics laterally, which destroyed her health.

speak!

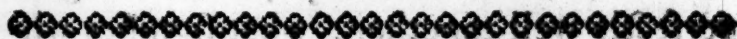
Speak! I should then dispense with *all nations*.
For 'tis to your merit that the honour of
that compliment more justly belongs.

Your letter is a master-piece. It has
been the subject of all the conversations
held at my apartments, this month past.
You retrieve your youth again—You do
well to love it. Philosophy and wit agree
perfectly well together: what signifies wis-
dom if it does not allure? I am certain that
you must ever please, while you preserve
the same turn of mind and sentiment you
possess at present.

Few people are able to resist old age;
but I fancy that I am not yet sunk under
the weight of it. I could wish with you
that the Dutchess of Mazarin had regarded
life in itself, without thinking of her face,
which would have been lovely to the last,
though

though good sense had taken the place of some few charms.

Lady Sandwich will always preserve the spirit of her wit, when she loses her youth; at least, this is my opinion. When you see her, pray make her remember me, for it would give me concern to be forgotten by her. Adieu.



ST. EVREMOND.

I Received a letter from you in the month of December that was dated the fourteenth of October. 'Tis somewhat stale for a letter, but good things are welcome though ever so late. You write gravely, and yet you charm: You render Seneca agreeable, which is a new character for him: You speak of your age, with all the spirit of youth.*

* Seneca wrote a treatise on old age.

I have

I have one curiosity which you can satisfy me about. Prithee, when you reflect upon your younger days, does not the remembrance of times past, occasion certain sentiments to arise, equally distant from the languor of indolence, and the strength of passion? Pray now, don't you feel in your heart, a secret opposition to that tranquil apathy, that you had flattered yourself you had calmed your mind into? For, to love, and be beloved, is a charming sympathy, which has blended itself in your breast, even with your very reason. To stop the current of amorous affections, one must interrupt the course of our days; for its only end is that of life.

Would to Heaven the fates may still continue to you thirty years more, of love and philosophy—This is what I pray for, on this first of the year 1701. A day on which those who have nothing better to bestow, make a new year's gift of their good wishes. Adieu.

THE

T H E
T R A N S L A T O R
T O T H E R E A D E R.

HERE ends the correspondence between that charming old couple, St. Evremond and Madame de l'Enclos. We may perceive from many hints in these letters, that several have been lost, on both sides; which I dare say the reader of any taste, must join with me in regretting.

There is a gaiety and spirit in these writings, that would render the youngest persons amiable; but to meet with all the chearfulness of youth, joined to the sense and judgment of maturity, without the least symptom of that weakness of mind, or decay of understanding, which generally

rally attend that stage of life, that is therefore stiled the years of *dotage*, must not only surprize, but render these extraordinary persons famous to all posterity.^b

These writings must equally please all ages. Here the young and gay may rejoice in the highest spirit of wit and gallantry; and the old triumph at instances exempt from the usual, but despicable effects of senescence. May these excellent examples serve to rouse up the supineness of all who are *declining in the vale of years*, and inspirit them to exert some effort to preserve their intellectual faculties from a lethargy! For I am convinced that dotage, though the usual, is not a necessary effect of age. But the mind grows indolent about the middle stage of life; and then the exercise of reading and reflection, which

^b St. Evremond was near ninety years, and l'Enclos above fourscore, when most of these letters were written.

which is requisite to prevent our sense and apprehension from stagnating, becomes too great a labour to us, unless an happy and more early habit should have rendered it easy and familiar.

One may well imagine that I could not rest satisfied here, or acquiesce in an opinion that there had not been any memoirs of so remarkable a woman, preserved in some of the French tracts of the last age, except what are contained in these letters. Besides, the anecdotes that I quoted from *The World*, hinted to me something further, but left me still at a loss how to direct my enquiry; when a friend of mine procured me an entertaining collection of detached pieces, lately published in France, under the title of *Le Petit Reservoir*, where I met with the following memoirs of this famous personage; which will afford a very high

high entertainment to the English reader, even through a translation.

The French writer begins with the following prefatory letter, addressed to a lady.

“ You have required from me, most amiable Eugenia, the history of Madame de l'Enclos, and I have been too hasty in promising it to you : for the searches I have made to satisfy your curiosity, have not been as successful as I could wish ; and I cannot supply you with any thing more than a slight and imperfect sketch of her character and memoirs. As for the rest, you are not to expect in the course of her life, a number of interested events, which are produced by the passions when they are obliged to oppose the veil of mystery to the yoke of importunity and restraint.”

Nor,

* This passage is forced and obscure. It alludes, I suppose,

Nor will you here meet with either the subtleties of coquetry, the artifices of infidelity, or the heinousness of perfidy. Love, liberty, and philosophy, in her walked hand in hand. She had a noble soul, but it had at the same time, a sensibility which forced her to yield to the lively impressions of her taste and appetites; and she had the address of joining with a certain air of congruity, the most gallant conduct with the most worthy principles. She was a faithful friend, whose virtue was guided by reason, and whose heart neither knew infidelity or deceit.

However, notwithstanding these rare and estimable qualities, few people, at present, acknowledge or agree about suppose, to romances, where the heroines are obliged to conceal their affections from the *importunity* of their lovers, and their actions from the *restraint* of the guardians. In his next paragraph he takes in Novel, "Nor will you here, &c.

her

her merit. Her worth by degrees begins to be forgotten, her foibles only discoursed of or remembered. The young look upon her as a person of great affectation, the women as one without morals, and the rest of the world as a finished picture of prejudice and enthusiasm.^d

But you, my fair Eugenia, who are blessed with sense and judgment, at an age when other women possess nothing more than beauty: you that judge nothing but yourself with security, will, I dare say, render justice to her character: You madam, will acknowledge her to be,

^d Nothing can be so absurd as the first and last of these opinions about her character; as neither of them can be supported by any passage in her life or writings. 'Tis said that most people have two characters; but I believe Ninon is the first that ever had three. She certainly had two, like other people, only with this remarkable peculiarity, that she deserved them both; namely, a good one, and a bad one.

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D.

what,

what, in reality, she was; the most amiable of her sex; and will not be surprized, that with a superior genius, an undecaying beauty, and many other extraordinary qualities, she should have been the delight of society, and the admiration of the age she lived in.

I am, Madam, &c."





T H E
L I F E A N D C H A R A C T E R
O F
N I N O N D E L' E N C L O S.



MAdemoiselle de l'Enclos, who under the name of Ninon has rendered herself famous in the last age, by the charms of her wit as well as her person, was only child of Monsieur de l'Enclos, a gentleman of Touraine, and of Mademoiselle de Raconis, his wife, a lady of Orleans. She was born in Paris, on the *Ides of May*, 1616, and was christened Anne.*

* Which is Ninon, in French.

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Her father had served in the army when he was a young man, about the latter end of Henry the fourth's, and the beginning of Lewis the thirteenth's reigns. Being remarked for one of the malecontents of his time, he was selected under this character, by the famous Cardinal de Retz, among the number of his friends, and continued attached to his interest, during the remainder of his life. Her mother was a great devotée, with a very narrow understanding.

Monsieur de l'Enclos, though a man of politics and faction, was a person of good sense and literature; and among other talents, was a perfect master of music, and an extraordinary performer on the lute: which occasioned the mistake of those who reported that Ninon was the daughter of a lutenist. But her father, who loved her passionately, had the fondness to teach her himself

himself on this instrument, and she became a most perfect mistress of it.

Her mother, who had a mind to make her a *devotée*, like herself, brought her every day to morning and evening prayers along with her; but the little Ninon always carried some entertaining book of history or poetry in her pocket, which she used to read by stealth while she was on her knees.

She lost her parents when she was very young: 'till which time she was reared up by a father who doated on her, and a mother that thwarted her in every thing. A rare education to form a capricious conduct! But without entering into the particulars of her *first life*, it may be sufficient to say, that she was so happily endowed by nature, that she almost framed herself without assistance. She had an high esteem for her father's understanding, and

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too great a deference for his opinions. But tho' the quickness of her apprehensions soon made her perceive the foibles of her mother, this never took off in the least from that respect and duty which became a child.

Her mother died when Ninon was but fourteen years old, and her father survived her only a year. So that at the tender and hazardous age of fifteen, she became mistress of herself and fortune. But, notwithstanding her extreme youth, she was found to have a manly sense, without masculine manners; was chearful without levity; had wit without pertness; a nice discernment, sound judgment, and a delicate taste.

Her stature was above the middle size; her person neither too plump or lean; well made, and finely proportioned: all together of an engaging figure; but fitter

to

to bear examining, than to strike at first sight. She had a very fair smooth skin, with a remarkable freshness in her complexion; her face a fine oval, her eyes large and hazle; her eye-brows dark, and well separated, with long eye-lashes; her hair of a deep chesnut colour; her nose well made, but rather high; her lips vermillion, her chin plump, her mouth prettily fashioned, and expressing an agreeable smile. She had a good forehead, fine teeth, and a neck beautifully turned. She had graceful arms, pretty hands, a strait, genteel shape, and very handsome limbs.

She had a *well-bred voice* in speaking; an open countenance, but sensible, tender and engaging; a remarkable air of neatness and delicacy in her appearance,

There is something, even in the tone of a voice, which distinguishes a gentleman from a plebeian. A polite ear will readily catch it.

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gaiety and sweetness in her manners ; a certain grace in every gesture ; a soul fondly devoted to pleasure ; and a mind fraught at the same time with the most angelic virtues.

She had a warm, earnest manner of expression, which without staying to convince, persuaded one into her opinions. She had every address of coquetry, with all the spirit of galantry : her whole air was capable of inspiring the warmest sentiments ; for she was possessed of those bewitching graces, that a desire to charm can render a fine woman mistress of ; and she herself seemed to breathe the same passion with which she inspired her admirers.

As to the rest, she was violent, hurried away by her taste and inclinations ; eager and lively about the least matters that affected herself ; cold, careless, and indolent, where her heart was not interested ;
and

and pretty insensible to most things in which she had herself not any concern. Such was the famous Ninon de l'Enclos. How many particulars may one pick up here, to palliate or excuse her failings!

Her beauty, and other outward accomplishments, (inconsiderable advantages in comparison of her understanding and merit) occasioned her to be sought after, very young, to be obtained in marriage, and surrounded her with a croud of suitors: but, as she had, even then, a singular aversion to matrimony, and a spirit determined for liberty, she could never be prevailed upon to think of fixing herself in such a scheme of life.

Her father too, who had himself experienced some disagreeable circumstances in that state, far from speaking favourably to her with regard to conjugal connections, had often freely recommended

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to her to follow the plan of conduct which she afterwards pursued through the whole course of her life ; and even on his death bed, calling her to him, spoke to her in the following terms.

“ My dear daughter, you see that all which
 “ remains to me in these last moments, is
 “ only the fruitless remembrance of pleasures that now abandon me ; the possession of which has not been of any long
 “ continuance ; and this is the chief thing
 “ that I have reason to complain of providence in. But alas ! my repinings now
 “ are vain ! You, my child, who have so
 “ many years to survive me, profit yourself early of your precious time. *Be always less scrupulous about the number, than*
 “ *the choice of your pleasures.*”*

* The French writer makes no manner of reflection upon this extraordinary passage, but I hope that the English reader is shocked at the whole paragraph.

Ninon

Ninon quickly perceived a world of good sense in an advice so very agreeable to her own inclinations; and immediately prepared herself to follow his instructions. She lived alone, but had a considerable number of acquaintance and friends, which every day increased, as she had collected in herself the most engaging talents; for, besides her wit, sense and beauty, she was perfect mistress of music, played extremely well on the harpsichord, lute, the orbo and guitar. She had only a weak chamber voice, but sung with an extreme fine taste, and danced with most admirable grace.

She never sacrificed much time at her toilet, but was always by so much the genteeler dressed, as she appeared to neglect that article. She generally wore plain, but rich cloaths, and conformed constantly to the different modes of the times, and

of

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of her own age. She had a great vivacity in her manners, but a remarkable mildness of disposition at the same time. She possessed the art of acquiring friends, and still more of preserving them. Though she was light in her engagements, and inconsiderate in her amours, she was extremely careful in the management of her fortune, and regular in the disposition of her whole œconomy; the fund of which was about ten thousand livres, life annuity; ^a of which she always reserved one year's income before hand, that she might have it in her power to assist her friends upon any emergency.

She had few domestics; a waiting maid, a valet de chambre, a footman, coachman, and cook, composed her household; but she had the art of having herself well served, always preserved her port, and had a certain air of dignity in every thing she did. She

^a About five hundred pounds a year.

She might have justly said, that she had been her own preceptor, and was but very little indebted to any other person for the improvement of her taste and understanding. Before ten years of age she had read Montaigne and Charron; and at fourteen, was celebrated through Paris for her wit and sense. She perfectly understood Spanish and Italian; had read with application, the best authors in either of these languages, and spoke them both with great ease. Historians, philosophers, poets, ancient and modern, even romances, nothing had escaped her reading. She had enriched her mind with all the beauties and treasures of antiquity, to which she had joined the flowers of modern erudition: and tho' she had no knowledge of Greek or Latin, she was an excellent critic in the best trans-

* A French writer in morality, of high esteem.

"Say sage Montaigne, or yet more sage Charron."

POPE.

lations

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lations of Vaugelas and Ablancourt. She wrote as she spoke, which was with a charming ingenuous simplicity, and always extempore. She had an elevation of mind, a greatness of soul, vast delicacy in her sentiments, and infinite grace in her manner of expression.

She used to recount some of her adventures, and told a story remarkably well; but seldom did it, because she hated to say the same thing twice. One day Mignard, the famous painter, lamented before her, that his daughter had a bad memory; I

^b Are Greek and Latin more difficult to attain than French and Italian? No. How comes it to pass then, that women shall be reckoned more *learned* for understanding the former, than the latter? That they shall be deemed more accomplished for being perfectly versed in one, and become subjects of ridicule for the least smattering in the other? But the *dead languages* happen to be engrossed by men; these are their peculiar privileges, and they are up in arms when we invade their provinces.

wifs

wish you joy, says she, for then she cannot quote. She was a great enemy to quotations, because they are apt to tire the company, and in some sort to humble them at the same time. Her knowledge was void of ostentation, accompanied always with modesty, and a polite regard to those she conversed with. She knew a great deal, but never affected to shew it.

What a difference between this charming woman, and the generality of the present triflers, of whom a pretty face comprehends their entire merit! endowed neither with character, sentiment, or manners; whose highest employment is knotting, and vacation cards; without reading, or conversation, except what they pick up, like parrots, from one another: who, without the mean and dangerous aids of play, scandal, or gallantry, are quite incapable of supplying any one topic of social

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cial converse : who acquire nothing more by increase of years, but an addition of ridiculous follies : and when their admirers, declining by degrees, at length forsake them, retire forlorn, to spleen, vapours, and repining prayer.

“ By acts of piety compound for evil,
“ And yield to God the leavings of the Devil.”

She lived in Parliament-street, behind the Palace royal, in a house that she had purchased for life. It was small, but extremely neat and convenient : it contained two apartments ; in the first, was a very handsome, large drawing-room, where she received her company ; who used to assemble there about five in the evening, and break up at nine. This salon was adorned with the portraits of her principal friends, and their paintings done by the most eminent masters. She placed her library and harpsichord here. At the farther end of the second apartment, there
was.

was a small room, more elegantly furnished than any other part of the house. The history of *Psyche* was painted, *al fresco*, on the ceiling; and all the pannels pourtrayed with the most gallant adventures of antient fable. None of the cruelties of love were here described; they were banished, even in idea, from this free scene, where every thing seemed to breathe successful passion.

It was here she chose usually to sit, and retire to, when her company happened to be small; and it was here she kept her lute. She seldom played; but when she did, one might imagine it to have been her sole occupation. Upon these occasions one was made almost amends for the loss of her conversation; as she had the power to infuse her very spirit into the instrument, and to draw from thence such flattering sounds, expressions, if I may so speak, so sensible and tender, that she seemed

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seemed to breathe her soul through the various tones of harmony, and her fingers might be said to have uttered sentiment. She had also a little country house at the Cordeliers, very pleasantly situated with regard to air, wood, and water; and in this retreat she used to spend her summer months, and frequently the autumn ones also.

Though Madame de l'Enclos had a soul naturally formed for gallantry, she was neither coquerish or inconstant. While her passion subsisted, she loved with sincerity and fidelity; for she was incapable of the least deceit or dissimulation; but, the moment that her liking ceased, which sometimes happened at an instant when she least expected it, all commerce of this kind, with that party, was at an end, for life.

As to the rest of her character, she was
of

of an even temper, and most engaging converse; an excellent friend, generous, disinterested, of great veracity, just, a strict observer of her word, steady in society, and of most remarkable honesty.

• There may appear some contradictions in this sketch of her character, when compared to one or two features of it, drawn in the first part of these memoirs. She is there said to have *every address of coquetry—cold, careless and indolent, where her heart was not interested.*—Here it is said, she was *neither coquette—that she was disinterested.*—But I do not think there need be any difficulty here. For, she might have employed *every address of gallantry* before she had fixed her engagements: and have laid aside all those arts, while she continued in it. She might also have been *cold, careless and indolent, where her heart was not interested,* and yet *disinterested,* where she had made her connections of friendship, love, &c.

But if this does not entirely solve the difficulty, we may refer to note ^a p. 49. where it is said that most people have *two characters.* And as these anecdotes have been collected from different writers, we may rather be surprized to meet with so much congruity upon the whole.

Among

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Among her lovers was Monsieur de Gourville;^d a man of refined sense and gallantry, greatly esteemed for his many good qualities, and closely attached to the Prince of Condé. In the year 1650, at the time of the civil war, stiled *La Fronde*, finding himself on the sudden, proscribed and obliged to quit the kingdom before he had time to adjust the œconomy of his affairs; he waited upon Madame de l'Enclos, the evening before his departure, and brought her twenty thousand gold crowns, which he begged she would keep safe for him 'till he might be at liberty to return. But, because he did not think it prudent to intrust his whole fortune into one hand, he deposited the like sum with Monsieur de - - -, a man in those days remarkable for the strictness of his morals, for the sway he bore over tender con-

^d The same who has been mentioned in one of her letters to St. Evremond.

sciences,

sciences, and the extraordinary character he had in Paris, for his honesty.

In about two months, Madame de l'Enclos, as was not unusual, engaged in a new amour. Poor de Gourville received an account of it in his exile, and was extremely alarmed at the news: he lamented his imprudence frequently, in not having used the precaution of taking some acknowledgment for the deposit, which it seems in both instances he had neglected: he had confided entirely in her fondness, and had but little dependence on a woman of intrigue, that when her tender connections were dissolved, her moral ties would remain unbroken. And this opinion continued to have such an effect upon his mind, that when he had permission to return, in about six months after, instead of calling upon Madame de l'Enclos, his only care was to go to Monsieur de - - - - ,
and

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and demand the money he had given into his charge; and which he then deemed to be the sum total of his unhappy fortunes. But, what a wretched situation did he find himself in, when this same *honest man*, notwithstanding his great character for probity, had the impudent villainy absolutely to deny the deposit, and affirmed to his face, that he had never received one shilling in trust for him!

Madame de l'Enclos having heard, some days after, of his arrival, and being surprized at his neglect, and the little impatience he had shewn to see her, sent to reproach him for it. He waited upon her the next morning; and on her observing a settled melancholy in his countenance, and enquiring the cause of his chagrin, he reported to her the story just now-recited. "Sir, says she, I have met also with a
" great misfortune in your absence, and
" must

" must throw myself entirely on your in-
 " dulgence for forgiveness: I have lost—
 " (here she paused) — the liking I had
 " for you: But, I have not lost my me-
 " mory. The twenty thousand gold crowns
 " that you left in my care, remain un-
 " touched, in the same casket which you
 " brought them in. Carry them away
 " with you directly; and, whenever you
 " afford me the pleasure of another visit,
 " remember that though you have lost a
 " mistress, you have gained a friend."

Every one has heard of her affairs with
 the Marquis de la Châtres. He was in
 love with her to distraction; and in the
 very height of his passion received an or-
 der from court, to join the army imme-
 diately. They must be separated from
 each other, perhaps for a long time—*a*
Lover's age, at least! and he has to begin
 his journey the next day. He grew in-
 consola-

consolable, he fell into despair, he cursed his destiny; "What is honour, what is duty! fame, wealth, or glory! what are ye to Love!" The afflicted Ninon did every thing in her power to calm his love-sick mind: but her caresses, her vows, her protestations,, with the most tender adieus, were not of the least avail.

At length, finding that nothing could compose his distraction, she be thought herself of giving him a note under her hand, in which she promised and vowed, that during his absence, nay during his life, she would never love any man in the world but himself. La Châtres was a weak person, and this expedient appeared an admirable security to him. He was transported with joy, kissed the paper an hundred times, put it up carefully in his pocket-book, and parted from her the most contented and most assured man alive.

But—

But—it was a fatality which she could not resist—the amorous Ninon before his return, had entered into a new engagement. The folly and extravagance of the *promissory note*, occurred strongly to her at that time; and when she had appointed her assignation, she cried out, *To be sure la Châtres has a very responsible bond of mine.* Which expression became afterwards a proverb at Paris; and she used often to laugh at it herself, whenever it came into her head.

She had an amour also with the Marquis de Gersey, by whom she had that unfortunate son who killed himself for her.* She had afterwards an affair with the Marquis

* This story has been already told in the *Introduction*, The father is there stiled the Count de Greze, as quoted from *The World*: In *Le Petit Reservoir*, he is called the Marquis de Gersey. But, Lord Jersey of England was the person; the name of whose family is Villiers.

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de Villarsceaux, whom of all her lovers, was the person she continued her constancy to for the longest time. Their connection lasted about five years, and might have subsisted longer on her part, who was always the first to change, if the accident which shall be mentioned just now, had not interrupted their amour.

He was young, handsome, finely made, and had much the air of a person of quality. His figure was altogether graceful and engaging; and he had a great deal of wit, vivacity and spirit. But, with all these agreeable qualities he was the most irregular man in the world, in affairs of gallantry. His chief passion was women; but he was not very delicate in his choice; and often divided his addresses between the most lovely mistress, and the most homely maid.

Besides, which is extraordinary in so free and general a lover, but judging of women's

men's hearts by his own, he was jealous to the last degree. He was sometimes so uneasy about Madame de l'Enclos, even while she was at his own house in the country, where she lived with him for three years, that he used to hide little boys under her bed at night, to watch if any rival was admitted when at any time he happened to be absent.

The Abbé Scarron, a celebrated author, who was among the number of Madame de l'Enclos' friends, threw aside the gown in the year 1651, and married Mademoiselle d'Aubigné, who was at that time, but sixteen years old. Madame de l'Enclos soon became acquainted with her, and found her remarkably sensible and agreeable for a young woman of her age. In a little time she contracted a strict intimacy

Afterwards Madame de Maintenon.

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with her, and as Monsieur Scarron's fortunes, by his quitting the church, had been reduced very low, she often lent her money, after the most generous manner; and shewed her in other things many instances of friendship, when she was under the greatest difficulties.

However, Ninon soon had reason to repent her of this connection; for the lovely Scarron, who was above twenty years younger than herself, paid her back with a sort of involuntary ingratitude, by alienating from her the heart of de Villarcœux, as was hinted above. Madame de l'Enclos was considerably piqued at first, and heartily repented the indiscretion of making an intimate companion of a woman so much younger than herself. But, she had a spirit in every thing—She was persuaded of Madame Scarron's innocence, she knew from her own experience, that lovers are not *perennials*.

rennials. She soon became reconciled to her, and continued ever after one of the sincerest of her friends. And after the death of Monsieur Scarron, which happened in 1660, the sympathy of their taste and humours became stronger ties to cement a fonder union: so that for some time, they lived intirely together, sharing the same house and the same bed.

Madame Scarron, being afterwards raised to the most elevated situation of life, never forgot the many instances of friendship from Madame de l'Enclos; and sought frequent occasions of shewing a becoming sense of gratitude.

Madame de l'Enclos had a son by de Villarceaux, who was more fortunate than her former, but of a singular character. He was named de la Boissiere. But as the Count d'Étrées immediately succeeded de Villarceaux, he used to claim this child as

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his own; and after several years dispute upon this point, not being able to fix the dates of their respective claims, they one day agreed to throw dice, in order to determine their pretensions. The lot fell to the Count d'Etrées, who becoming afterwards marshal of France, and vice-admiral, put this adoption in the marine, and took care to advance his fortunes.

This Monsieur de la Boissière was resident mostly at Toulon; he was a very good officer, of remarkable bravery, and highly esteemed in the navy. Music was his only amusement, which he had an extraordinary passion for, though he did not understand it, nor was even acquainted with the notes. He had in his house a very large separate apartment, which he dedicated to the God of Harmony, and was furnished with every kind of musical instrument. Here he used to assemble all the performers that passed through

through Toulon, in their way to France, from Italy, or back again, and after regaling them plentifully with champagne, he would have a concert performed for himself alone, and never desired any other company. He died unmarried at Toulon in 1732, aged seventy-six.

The Marquis de Sevigné paid his addresses to her when she was much advanced in years; but she declined them. She was not to be won but where she particularly liked; and she had no clever opinion of him. She used to say, that he had the simplicity of a dove, a soul of panado, a body of wet paper, and a heart of orange gourd, soured in snow; in short, a man beyond all manner of description. She had formerly endeavoured to

* Son to Madame de Sevigné, of whom we have a collection of letters, to her daughter, that are much esteemed.

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put a little life and spirit into him, by a correspondence she entered into with him on the subject of gallantry. Her letters indeed, are allowed to be *Chef d'Oeuvres*, for wit and sentiment, by the concurrent applause of all the ingenious writers since her time: but his, have not been transmitted to us, as not being deemed worthy of the press. Nor are they at all necessary to illustrate hers, as she mostly quotes those passages from them which her own refer to.^a

Madame de l'Enclos was past sixty years of age, when the famous John Bannier, nearly related to the kings of Sweden, threw himself at her feet. This was the person who was afterwards killed in a duel, at London, by Prince Philip of Savoy, in 1686.

^a Her letters follow in the course of this work, and will probably make the best part of the reader's entertainment here.

But

But the last of her lovers upon record, and the most extraordinary of her gallant adventures, was the story of the Abbé Gedoine, which is perhaps, the most singular thing of this kind, that ever was remembered.* The amour between them continued about a year. He went into Orleans at that time, which she did not seem pleased with; and he staid longer away than he had promised, at parting.

When he came to see her, on his return, "My dear Abbé, said she, the shortest follies are the best. I perceive, somewhat too late, that it was an absurd step in me to accept of your addresses at this age of life. I would not carry on the frolick farther. Let us fairly quit each other this instant, and take leave for the rest of our lives."

* This story has been already told in *the World*, and as it was quoted before, in the *Introduction* to this work, I shall not repeat it here,

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Thus, after having at the age of four-score, inspired a young man of twenty-five, with a real passion for her; it was she who quitted him, and made the first motion of breaking off. The Abbé was sensibly affected at this rupture; however he continued to visit, to love and esteem her, during the remainder of her life; but from that time had never the least commerce with her, except as a friend.

She never drank any thing but water, though she eat very heartily; and was so gay and lively during her meals, that people used to say, her soup had got into her head.

She loved every one she esteemed; she used to say, but ingenuously confessed, that she did not always esteem those she loved.

When men, she said, once boast of their ancestry, 'tis probable they have little

little else to be vain of: wits vaunt themselves upon their talents, because they imagine them to be singular. But persons of good sense are never proud of any thing. And though she had during the whole course of her life, been treated with the greatest respect and complaisance, by persons of the highest rank; enough to have flattered the vanity of any other woman; it did not in the least affect her. She knew well the value of such sort of things, and rated them accordingly. And in reality, she was neither insolent, nor vain, nor envious: she was however, naturally jealous of other women's merit, and this was her only foible.

Christina, Queen of Sweden, who came to Paris in 1656, where she remained for two years, was charmed with the conversation of Madame de l'Enclos, and declared at parting, to the whole court, that she

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had not met with any woman in France, whom she liked or admired so much as the *illustrious Ninon*; which was her expression.

Christina loaded her with presents and encomiums, and took all the pains in her power, to prevail on her to go with her to Rome. But, praises only render those giddy, who are not much used to them.— They did not make Ninon vain. She returned her majesty a great many thanks for the kind attachment she had expressed towards her, but suffered her to travel away, without her.

She had but an indifferent opinion of mankind in general, and has said that when sin knocks with a purse of gold at the door of indigence, it is very rarely refused admittance.

She had a great talent for reflections, and had she spent her life in writing, instead

stead of *living*, we should have been in possession of one instance at least, to prove modern wit equal to the most refined genius of antiquity. I shall here amuse you with some more of her *thoughts upon various subjects*.

They are either to be pitied or condemned who are obliged to have recourse to religion for the conduct of their lives. 'Tis a sign they have either a narrow soul, or a corrupt heart.

Large hands and a big belly are certain signs of ignobility.

Beauty without grace, is a hook without a bait.

Wrinkles are better placed on the *beel* than the *forehead*.

We should make provision for food, but never for pleasure; which we should catch extempore.

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A woman should never take a lover without the consent of her heart; nor an husband without the concurrence of her reason.

There is nothing in nature so various as the pleasures of love; and yet they are always the same.

The poets were fools to furnish Cupid with a torch, or bow and arrow; for the power of that deceit is owing intirely to his blindness.

Love destroys reflection; and reason in its turn, puts an end to love.

It requires infinitely a greater genius to make love, than to make war.

There are certain privileged souls, who are capable of finding in love itself, reasons for still loving on.

How unhappy are women! Their own sex

for their most inveterate enemy. An husband tyrannizes; a lover dishonours and despises them. Watched on all sides, thwarted in all things; ever in fear and in constraint; without support or succour; with a number of lovers, but not one friend. Is it then to be wondered at, that they should become a compound of humour, dissimulation and caprice?

She said one day to Monsieur de St. Evremond, that she returned thanks every night to God, for the strength of her mind, and prayed every morning to preserve it from the weakness of her heart.

St. Evremond was the oldest of her friends: he had never been one of her lovers, but was always enamoured of her wit, sense, and taste, and above all, of that philosophic turn which ran through all her reflections, sentiments, and conduct. He addressed a great many
pieces

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pieces to her, both in verse and prose, that may be found among his works; particularly, an excellent discourse on the morals of Epicurus, which he dedicated to her, under the title of *The modern Leontium*; alluding to a lady of that name at Athens, famous for her gallantries and philosophy, which she studied under Epicurus.

Madame de l'Enclos happened to yawn one day, at the reading of a tedious oration that the Abbé Tallemont had spoken upon his reception into the French academy. St. Evremond, who was present, wrote a few extemporary lines, which turned upon this metaphor, that the *figures* of rhetoric are very insipid after *those* of Aretin.

Le Pere d'Orleans, a Jesuit, author of the *Revolutions of England*, and many other writings, said to her one day, on account of some articles of faith which had stagnated her reason, and suspended

her

her belief; “Madam, while you are
 “waiting for conviction, make a sacrifice
 “of your incredulity to God.” Fontenelle
 to whom she mentioned this particular,
 told it afterwards to Rousseau, who has
 made it the *point* of one of his epigrams.

A friend of hers came one day, to
 make her a confidant of his passion, for
 one of the finest women at court. “Sir,
 “said she, it must be by the highest re-
 “spect and assiduity, extreme complai-
 “sance, and constant homage, that you
 “can expect to share the great love and
 “admiration, which your mistress has
 “been already inspired with—for her own
 “beauty. Speak to her incessantly of
 “her charms, and but seldom of your
 “passion: for be assured, that she is an
 “hundred times more pleased with the
 “loveliness of her own person, than she
 “can possibly be with all the beauty of
 your

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“ your sentiments. But, if ever she
 “ should surrender to your solicitations,
 “ remember, that in yielding up her
 “ heart, she has deposited in your hands,
 “ the whole happiness of her life; that
 “ she has intrusted you with your honour
 “ and repose; and hath thus rendered
 “ you the absolute sovereign of her des-
 “ tiny. How few men are responsible for
 “ such a confidence!”

Her principal friends were the Count-
 tefs de la Suze, the Countefs de Olonne,
 the Marchionefs de Castelnau, the Mar-
 chionefs de la Ferté, the Dutchefs de
 Sully, the Countefs de Fiesque, Madame
 Fayette, Madame Scarron, Madame Choisy,
 Madame de Sevigné,* Madame de Grig-
 nan her daughter, Madame du Tort, Ma-
 dame de Colange, the Marchionefs of

* The same lady that was mentioned note § p. 79.

Lambert, the Dutcheſs de Bouillon-Mancini, Lady Sandwich, and a number more of perſons of the beſt rank in France.

This famous woman died at Paris, on the ſeventeenth of October 1706, aged ninety years and five months; mourned and regretted by all her friends and acquaintance. It is of her alone, that one might ſay with truth, that ſhe had preſerved the flowers of ſpring, even till the autumn was paſt; and that time, which defaces all things, flew o'er her charms, *like an arrow in the air*, without leaving any trace of its paſſage behind.

The Abbé Chateauneuf wrote an epitaph for her, in verſe, which concludes with this character, that ſhe had the charms

She was the author of ſeveral very ingenious traſts, which as well as Madame de Sevigné's letters, are moſt barbarouſly tranſlated into Engliſh.

Of

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of Venus, with the soul of an angel^d. He has also drawn her character at large, very finely; and I shall jubjoin it here, for your further entertainment.

“As soon as any person became acquainted with Madame de l’Enclos, they immediately rendered justice, both to her merit and her charms, and could not avoid crying out, in their minds, “What elegance! what beauty! graces that dart through the soul! what have I been doing all the rest of my life, which I have suffered to pass away without having seen or known her?”

She always appeared to you the same at last, that she did at first; and as she ever preserved the charms of her lively wit, her conversation was youthful at fourscore; and she attained even in her youth, that

^d Here is a confusion of theology. An unpardonable blunder in an *Abbé*.

solidity of sense and judgment which in her advanced years appeared to be the fruit of age and experience; so that many sentiments and reflections of hers when she was a very young woman, may be repeated now, to prove that she was capable of *reasoning* at an age when others are scarce capable of *thinking*. In a word, the strength of her foresight had joined the future to the present, under one view.

The age had often changed its taste, during her *century*; and fashion did not exert its empire less upon the ways of thinking than it did upon the modes of dress. However Madame de l'Enclos conformed herself successively to the different manners, without being different from herself; and was always in the fashion without copying any body. She had her *own sense*, and not that of the times; and when one has the happiness to be blest with true sense in themselves;

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selves, they have the best sense of all times. In fine, nothing but that equal mixture of solid and agreeable qualities which she possessed, could have preserved that constant tenor of approbation and esteem which she so remarkably enjoyed, through the whole course of her life.

She never affected to appear knowing, but on the contrary, to claim all the privileges and immunities of ignorance; and though she had both read and digested a great deal, she seldom remembered what she had read; but had a singular kind of recollection; which was, that whenever any historical fact, a verse, or any other passage, happened to have a relation to whatever she, or any body else was conversing about, they immediately occurred to her mind; and then became as it were her own, by the use or application she made of the quotation or allusion; and appeared

peared quite new from the turn she gave them.

If any ridiculous incident or whimsical adventure happened within her knowledge or observation, at any time of her life, she never forgot the least particular of them that was entertaining. And, with what spirit and humour would she relate them! What would be but a simple tale from the recital of another, became from her description, a perfect scene. The very action itself; both from the justness of the characters, and the exactness and brevity of the story, in which one could find nothing to add, or to diminish.

Moliere mentioned to me a circumstance relating to her, a few days before he exhibited his *Tartuffe* to the public. We were in company together, where the

* Our play of the *Non Juror* is taken from this piece.

conversation

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conversation happened to turn upon the subject of mimickry; and a person asked him the reason, why the same ridicule that had escaped us in the original character, should afterwards strike us so strongly in the copy? He answered, that it was because we perceived it then, by the eyes of the mimic, which were quicker than our own. For, added he, *the talent of seeing with ones own eyes, is not given to every body.*

Upon which occasion, he mentioned Madame de l'Enclos to us, as the person in the world, upon whom a ridiculous character made the quickest and most lively impression. He told us that he had read his Tartuffe to her some time before; for he used always to consult her upon every piece he writ; as indeed did all the wits of her age; but she paid him back his entertainment, by relating an adventure which she had formerly, with an hypocrite of the
same

same kind; whom she described in so strong and *pittoresque* a manner, that he assured us if he had not finished his play, he would never have attempted it; as he would have despaired of being able to produce a character on the stage, so highly drawn as the Tartuffe of Madame de l'Enclos.

As she was so quickly struck with the absurd part of characters, it was not surprising that she was capable of describing them so well: but, it must still be matter of wonder that so dangerous a talent should never happen to be the cause of her losing any one friend. But, people were always disposed to accept every thing in good part, from a person who never spared any thing that was amiss in herself; and who was always the first to correct in her own behaviour, whatever gave offence in another's. She was besides, so much above envy or ill nature, she had given so many proofs of the generous and humane disposition of her heart, and her friendship was so esti-

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mable, that her railleries were rather accepted as admonitions, than resented as reproaches.

The first thing that Madame de l'Enclos made of reason, was to free the mind from common prejudices : She very early began to apprehend that both men and women were subject equally, to the same moral :^f according to which maxim, which she made the rule of her conduct, through the course of her life, she could never be induced, either from custom or example, to indulge herself in falshood, ill nature, scandal, envy, or any of these worthless qualities, which tho' common to women, do nevertheless dishonour their charac-

^f Madame de l'Enclos is perfectly right in her maxim ; for there certainly is no such distinction in religion as *a male and female scripture* : but she is dangerously wrong in the inference she seems to have drawn from it ; for the reasoning on this head should be *to restrain men, not to set women free.*

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ters, and offend against the rights of civil society.^s

But this principle which made her judge of the human passions and foibles according to what they are in themselves, independent of gender, made her condemn them with an equal severity in both sexes; for which reason, she abhorred that unjust and tyrannical custom in men, of arrogating to themselves a vain triumph upon that *adventure* to which they affix infamy in women: arbitrarily, and contrary to all sense and moral, reducing their virtue to a single point. As if integrity of life and manners, which comprehends the whole, was absolutely interdicted to them. A

^s The Abbé Chateauneuf has descended here to a very mean and unfair common place sarcasm. The worthless qualities he attributes to us are no more peculiar to women than to men: they are vices common to all weak, base or uneducated minds, whether male or female; and are as frequently to be met with in their sex as ours; but with the addition of some greater and more ungenerous crimes, on their part.

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prejudice not only false in its principle, but so much the more dangerous, as it has often been productive of the most shocking misfortunes of their lives : for, having once happened to fail in what they have been taught to deem their principle, nay almost sole obligation, they are apt, too hastily, generally to conclude, that they have no other duty to regard ; at least, the world does so for them ; and become therefore, careless about every thing else.

“ She sets, like stars which fall, to rise no more.”

This gave occasion to the Duke de Rochefaucault, to enter it down among his collection of maxims, that *the least fault in a frail woman, was her frailty*. By which is meant, that as the world is at present constituted, with regard to this particular, it is more regular, and perhaps more difficult, to stop at that single weakness, than even to get the better of it.

But, if Madame de l'Enclos declared war against so dangerous a prejudice, which

which by making an amour the highest crime of women, seemed to leave them at liberty to abandon themselves to every other; she equally opposed the romantic error of those, who under the title of a *noble passion*, would elevate love to the dignity of a virtue. She considered it, as it really is, a transitory taste, founded intirely on the illusion of the senses, an inconsiderate affection, tho' a bewitching one, which by its peculiar charms, softens all the cares, and sweetens the bitterness of life; and which alone is capable of filling up all those craving voids that every other passion leaves aching in our breasts. However, a caprice only, or fortuitous sensation; the continuance of which depends neither upon ourselves or others: subject to inconstancy, to disgust, and frequently to repentance.

Upon the whole, she used to sum up her philosophy on this head, with concluding that as this passion takes its rise meerly from an accidental turn of mind, or a critical

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disposition of humours, it did not denote the least merit in the beloved object, and was therefore, no manner of compliment to it. Consequently, had no spring to raise our vanity, nor any right to exact return.

But her notions of friendship were quite contrary to these. She bestowed all her confidence and esteem upon this high-prized connection. This, she acknowledged to be a noble, liberal and elevated passion; in which generous commerce she would not admit the least infidelity, inconstancy, or reserve; and would often declare to her lovers, that they had no rivals so much to be jealous of, as her friends.

To conclude; this charming and extraordinary woman has shewn the world, that a delicacy and a moral may be preserved even in libertinism. She extended the career of gallantry beyond all former precedents; and continued to be the object of admiration, desire, and esteem, for almost
a cen-

a century; and both her lovers and her friends were persons of the highest rank or station in France. But, she never engaged in any one amour upon this consideration; her gallantries were all disinterested; for she thought that there were in love itself, sufficient reasons for loving. She never permitted her lovers any sort of liberality; and was so nice in this particular, as to refuse even the smallest present, which she would, perhaps, have made no scruple of accepting from the hands of another.

She liked however, to have her lovers generous in themselves, though she herself declined any advantage from it; as she esteemed it the character of a great and liberal soul. The generosity of true lovers, she used to say, is only an ingenious attention, dictated by a noble and delicate sensation, which is fond, by little assiduities, to entertain the graces of love, without alarming its pleasures.^a She

^a This passage is very ingeniously and delicately
F 4. ima-

She was herself naturally generous ; she loved to give, and did it always with most admirable grace ; for she shewed a *pleasure* not a *pride* in giving. Her pride was better shewn in refusing the gifts of others ; and when those who had been the lovers of her youth, attempted to make her considerable presents when age had diminished imagined and expressed ; though the sense of it is not obvious enough to every apprehension. I will give the original words, that the reader may pick his own sense out of them. *La générosité des vrais amans, disoitelle, n'est autre chose qu'une attention ingénieuse, dictée par une sensation noble & délicate, qui se plaît à entretenir, par des petits soins, les graces de l'amour, sans allarmer ses plaisirs.*

What I take Ninon to have intended here, was to point out that fine address with which a polite lover should behave toward his mistress, for fear of offending against a certain delicacy of sentiment, peculiar to generous minds. Swift gives a definition of a *present* to a superior, in which light a mistress is always to be considered ; *something of small value, but not easily to be had for money.* A gallant lover should ever attend to this nice point, lest his gifts should assume the air of *bribes* instead of *presents*.

her

her charms, and impaired her health, and her charities had streightened her fortunes, she was more affected with the nobleness of their sentiments, than the liberality of their gifts; and she always returned them on the instant; as her spirit was above receiving any thing from the hands of love, or even those of friendship.

People who saw Madame de l'Enclos for the first time, toward the latter end of her life, were surprized at the appearance of that grave mien, and respectable countenance, where sense and philosophy alone seemed to have taken their seat. They confessed that they sought in vain for those beauties which they had formed so agreeable an idea of; and that they could scarcely perceive any traces of that charming Ninon whom the world had formerly been so much enamoured of. But, notwithstanding her great age, if one examined her eyes, they would perfectly agree with the Abbé Gadoine, who said, "That one might in

F 5

"them

“them, even at ninety, read the whole
 “history of her life.” What effects then
 must they have been capable of producing,
 when enlivened with all the fire and spirit
 of youth! when accompanied with a lively
 and smooth complexion, a person of dig-
 nity and ease, with a grace in all her move-
 ments, and particularly in dancing, which
 no woman ever equalled!

One may well conclude, that all these
 beauties, animated with a mind and soul
 like hers, must have been perfectly capa-
 ble of engaging all hearts. In fine, one
 cannot too often repeat what has been so
 many times said of her before, “That she
 “had joined all the virtues of our sex to the
 “charms of her own; in spite of which
 “gender she had raised herself to the rank
 “of the most illustrious men.”

Toward the latter end of her life, her
 house was become the resort of all the wor-

^a Here is another impertinence thrown out by the
 Abbé against our sex.

thy

thy and polite of both sexes in the kingdom; as also of the most learned or distinguished persons in the republic of letters. Her apartments were esteemed the center of good company; and the most strict and virtuous parents used what address they could, when their sons began to enter into the world, to gain them the advantages of being admitted into so improving and respectable a society: But high birth or the strongest recommendations, were often vain pretensions; for it required a great deal of real merit, besides a long sollicitation, before any one could arrive at that honour.

The Abbé Fraquiere told me a particular once, that may be mentioned very properly in this place. She had complained to him in a jesting way, of her having made one bad *purchase*, as she termed it, on the opinion of her friends; and was most stupidly over-reached by their instances. It was with regard to Monsieur Rémonde, nicknamed the *Greek*, because he was well

skilled in that language, and had built a house upon a Grecian model, that was uninhabitable. She used to say of him, “I have many things to be displeased at with myself, but there is one that has mortified me more than all the rest: I have bought Rémonde, and find out too late, that he will never quit *cost*.”

He had been introduced into her society, at the reiterated request of some of his friends, who always spoke of him as an accomplished person. But, after the first imposition was over, and that she began to open her eyes upon so much boasted merit, she declared that she had been made the dupe of his *Greek erudition*; lamented the time she had thrown away in endeavouring to polish his manners; and in fine, declared him banished from her porch, because all his sense and philosophy appeared to be *left banded*.^b Thus

^b I have read Plato, in *English*; and there is a passage quoted from Homer, out of one of his works that

Thus far the Abbé Chateauneuf; to which I shall add an extract from the Abbé de la Fare, and then conclude.

"I did not know Madame de l'Enclos, says he, in the prime of her *first* beauty; but at fifty years of age, nay after seventy, she had lovers fond of her to adoration; and persons of the first quality in France were her most affectionate friends. For my own part, I do affirm, that I never knew any woman in my life so perfectly worthy of esteem, nor whose loss has been so deservedly lamented.

"She assembled about her people of the best sense and talents, who were collected together by the charms of her conversation, and politeness of her manners; and her house, even in the last stage of her life, was perhaps, the only one in Paris, where

that is lost, pretty much the same with this sarcasm of Ninon's. It is thus translated in prose; *He knew many things, but knew them all amiss.*

persons

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persons might enjoy a liberal converse of wit and letters, and where one could pass away whole winter evenings, without weariness, scandal, or play.

“At the age of ninety, her company was still sought after, by the youngest persons of gaiety, taste and sentiment: for to a soul naturally formed for agreeableness, and which had never sacrificed but to *the* *graces*, she had joined a most admirable judgment, inspirited by the most lively imagination; and to an extreme age preserved such an air of youth and beauty, that the Abbé Chaulieu used to say, *Cupid had retreated even into the wrinkles of her forehead.*

“When she found herself drawing near her end, she frequented her parish church as often as her health would permit, as indeed she used to do, all her life: she made a *general confession*, and received the sacrament on her death-bed with all the sentiments

OF NINON DE L'ENCLOS. III

ments of an unfeigned piety. She died with all her senses perfect, and even with the same liveliness of wit, for which she was so remarkable during her whole life."

I have here, most fair Eugenia, collected for your entertainment, every thing I could learn, either of the life or character of this most charming and extraordinary woman; which I have copied from the anecdotes supplied to me by Monsieur de Fontenelle, the Abbé Fraquiere, Abbé Gadoine, Chateauneuf, La Fare, &c. who were her intimate friends.

I give you my memoirs, and my authorities, and am, Madam, with admiration and respect,

Your, &c.

THE

THE TRANSLATOR

TO THE READER.

I HAVE given you here the Memoirs and Character of Madame de l'Enclos, as well as I could pick them up, out of the several detached pieces which are collected in the *Petit Reservoir*: I had a good deal of difficulty to frame a consistent story and description of her from the various accounts of different writers: I have laboured to reconcile several contradictions, have left out some passages which repeated the same things in other words; and have neglected other particulars, that would neither have enlarged her Memoirs, nor have entertained the reader.

The method I made use of, was this: I read over all the papers which any way related

lated to this extraordinary woman; and when I had made myself perfectly *mistress* of the subject, I digested the whole of her life and character into as regular and consistent a series as I was able. Upon the whole, I may be said, rather to have rewritten her history, than to have translated the *Petit Reservoir*.

Now, with regard to the freedom and libertinism of her principles, we are not to judge too strictly about the morals of a French lady, upon the point of gallantry; when it has so long since become, by the corruption of manners, a part of polite breeding among them, as the playing of cards is with us.

I do not suppose that the education of French women is formed upon this plan, with a view toward their following a licentious course of life; but only as men of fortune breed their sons to the law, meerly to put them on their guard against the chicanery of the law itself. How.

However, this knowledge sometimes prompts women to adventure too hazardous a commerce with the other sex; and the admission of gallantry, though with the saving of one point, may leave perhaps, too much temptation in the way of human frailty. Add to this, that the free manners in general of the polite part of the French nation, serve to screen a woman there from the imputation of circumstances leading to the very door of truth, which the slightest indiscretion would load the chaste woman among us with.

They are therefore, less defended by *out-works*; and the indulgences, absolutions, and redeemable penances of their *commode* religion too, may be here taken into consideration, and opposed to the strict purity, and rational tenets of protestantism. But, this is no place to enter into a disquisition of divinity.

In fine, I do not think that the polite accom-

accomplishments and dangerous latitudes of a southern education, are perfectly compatible with true chastity or virtue. But then, it may seem as unfair to censure a French lady of fashion for her gallantry, as it would be to condemn the fair Georgians for supplying the seraglio's, when each is but part of the civil commerce of their respective nations.*

The only security in such desperate cases, seems to be the virtuous and happy state of matrimony, contracted upon a perfect union of free choice and chaste affection: but, alas! the early libertinism of men, which renders them dissolute of manners, and inconstant of affections, too frequently dissolves this charming connection, and

* Georgia and Circassia are provinces of Asia, remarkable for the beauty of their women. The eastern seraglio's are generally supplied from thence; and on this account, inoculation was first introduced there, in order to preserve or insure the features and complexion of the sultana's.

fets

sets them loose again, to be hurried down the foul current, and guided by the tainted gales of a corrupt and vitiated age.

I have made these general reflections, not in strictness as a *justification*, but in some sort as an *apology*, for the libertine life of our frail heroine. Perhaps, had she been educated in our manners and religion, she might have left a more consistent character behind her; and not have been recorded both as an honour and disgrace to our poor helpless sex.

In the same *Petit Reservoir*, I met also with a dialogue, supposed to have been held between Madame de l'Enclos and Madame Maintenon, after she was in effect, and I believe in reality, Queen of France. It is written in the allowed characters of them both;—in the free philosophic spirit of one, and the repining uneasy manner of the other.^d And as I ima-

^d See her life in *The Age of Lewis XIV.* by Voltaire.

gine it will entertain my English reader, I shall supply him with a translation of it here.*

*A Dialogue between Madame MAINTENON
and Madame de L'ENCLOS.*

MAINTENON.

My dear Ninon! I have invited you to pay me a visit in private: you may perhaps imagine, that it is with a design of dazzling your eyes with my splendor. Far from it.—It is rather to receive consolation from you.

L'ENCLOS.

Consolation, Madam! you astonish me. I protest, that not having had the honour of much intercourse with you since your arrival at such supreme grandeur, I really took it for granted, that you were completely happy.

* This piece is attributed to Voltaire, by the editor of the *Reservoir*.

MAIN-

M A I N T E N O N.

You are of the general opinion: there are a sort of people who would rest satisfied at that point. My soul is of a different cast. In short, I have never ceased to regret your company, since we parted last.

L ' E N C L O S.

I apprehend it. You feel, amidst all your glory, a want of friendship: while I, who live only for that social pleasure, feel no passion of ambition. But, prithee, why have you forgot me so long?

M A I N T E N O N.

Perhaps my situation required it. But, believe me, that among the difficulties which my elevation has subjected me to, I have always looked upon this misfortune, as the highest.

L ' E N C L O S.

For my part, I have neither forgot my former pleasures, nor my old friends. But,
if

if you are really as unhappy as you affirm, you have cheated the whole world of their envy.

MAINTENON.

I was deceived myself, the first. When we used formerly to sup together, at your little house in Parliament-street, with De Villarceaux and Nanboüillot, when the lowness of my fortunes was subject of melancholic reflection; if any one had prophesied to me, “ You shall one day ascend
“ a throne; the greatest monarch of the
“ world shall place his chief confidence in
“ your counsels; all his favours shall pass
“ through your hands; you shall be honoured like a queen:” if, I say, such predictions had been made to me then, I should have cried aloud, *Their accomplishments would overwhelm me with surprize and joy!* All this has already come to pass.—I was sensible of the *surprize* at first;—but have ever since expected the *joy*—in vain!

L'EN-

L'ENCLOS.

Philosophers, perhaps, may give you credit for all this: but the world will hardly be brought to believe that you are unhappy; or should they be ever convinced of it, they would certainly lay the whole blame upon yourself.

M A I N T E N O N.

Why should they not be deceived, as well as I? Every one is placed as chance directs, in different degrees of life; and all the subordinate ones imagine the highest felicity to be the portion of the highest rank. What an error!

L'ENCLOS.

I agree with you: but this error is necessary to the world. Men would not be at the trouble and hazard of raising themselves above the common level, if they did not most stupidly conclude, that superior happiness was the lot of superior stations. You and I have both of us experienced
plea-

pleasures, more free from illusion. But pray now tell me how it comes to pass that your condition of life should happen to render you so miserable?

M A I N T E N O N.

Ah, my dear *Ninon*! ever since I was obliged to drop the freedom of *that appellation*, for the formal address of *Madame de l'Enclos*, I ceased to be happy: my station required me to assume a reserve; this is sufficient: my heart became a void; my mind was under constraint; I *am* indeed the first personage of France, but 'tis merely a *personated* character. I live a borrowed life! Oh! if you knew the task imposed upon a languid soul to strive to animate another soul,—to amuse a mind no longer capable of amusement!

L ' E N C L O S.

I comprehend the whole mystery of your situation. I am afraid of insulting you by this reflection, that *Ninon* is infinitely

happier in her little house at Paris, with the Abbé Chateauneuf and some other familiar friends of no great rank in life, than you are at Versailles, in the company of the greatest monarch in Europe, who renders his whole court your vassals. I am loth to boast the superiority of my condition: I know that one should not appear too much elated before the unfortunate. Endeavour, most illustrious princess, to *support your grandeur*, with patience and resignation: try to forget the happy obscurity that formerly we both rejoiced in, as well as you have been obliged to forget your former friends. All that is left for you in your present state, is to cry out continually, "Past pleasures, that must never take their turn again! Tormenting thought! Oh why, in losing these, did I not lose the remembrance of them also!" Drink of the river Lethe, Madam, and console yourself, if possible, by reflecting upon so many Queens who have
so

so oft' lamented their pompous, but forlorn state!

M A I N T E N O N.

Ah, Ninon, what a wretched comfort is this! But I have a proposal to make you: and yet, I dare not.

L' E N C L O S.

'Tis for you to be afraid. But speak freely—out with it.

M A I N T E N O N.

'Tis to barter your philosophy for my state, to raise you to an high rank, and keep you to live with me always at Versailles. You will then be my friend, more than ever, by assisting me to support my present condition.

L' E N C L O S.

I always loved you, Madam, but must confess that I love myself somewhat better. There is no reason that I should turn hypocrite, or become miserable, merely because fortune has rendered you so.

M A I N T E N O N.

Ah, cruel Ninon ! you have a heart more callous and selfish than they have even at court. You abandon me without remorse.

L ' E N C L O S.

No—my character is sensibility : you make me relent ; and to prove that I retain my former friendship for you, I shall make you a proposal in turn. Quit Versailles, and come live with me, in Parliament-street.

M A I N T E N O N.

You wound me to the heart. I cannot be happy on a throne : nor can I be so in retiring from it. Behold the fatal effects of a court !

L ' E N C L O S.

I pretend to no medicine for an incurable distemper. I shall consult the philosophers of my acquaintance, upon the state of your case : but I cannot promise you that they will be able to work miracles in your favour.

MAIN-

M A I N T E N O N.

To be placed on the very summit of grandeur,—to be worshipped, to be envied, and yet to be the subject of compassion!

L' E N C L O S.

Attend a little. Perhaps there may be something here, not rightly understood. You imagine that it is your situation in life which renders you unhappy. May not your real misfortune proceed rather, from your not having such brilliant eyes, so good an appetite, or such lively sensations, as formerly? To lose one's youth, beauty, and affections, is a truly wretched state indeed! From their cause alone I have known a great number of women turn devotees at fifty, and relieve themselves from one weariness, by flying to another.

M A I N T E N O N.

But, you are much older than I am, and yet are neither unhappy, nor a devotee.

L'ENCLOS.

Let us discuss this point a little. We cannot at our time of life expect compleat felicity. One must have a soul capable of lively impressions, and five senses in perfection, to rejoice in such a triumphant state as that; but, by the helps of friends, liberty, and philosophy, one may be sufficiently happy for our stage of life. The soul is never uneasy, but when moved out of its proper sphere. Take my word and experience for it, and fly to the shelter of my porch.

MAINTENON.

Behold two ministers of state, coming to interrupt us. This is a scene very different from philosophy. Farewel then, my dear Ninon!

L'ENCLOS.

Adieu, most august unfortunate!

A short time after I had met with these anecdotes of the life and manners of the famous Ninon de l'Enclos, an extraordinary

nary chance threw the following series of letters in my way : and having thus fortuitously collected so many particulars relating to so extraordinary a person, I was tempted to amuse the public, by giving them all together, under one view.

When I read these letters in the original, I confess I was most highly entertained with the ease of her stile, the spirit of her writing, and uncommonness of her sentiments ; and if the English reader finds himself disappointed in any of these expectations, he must be either void of all taste himself, or lay the fault upon the translator.

We are to suppose that they were not designed for the press, by a letter the transcriber writes, when he sends the manuscript copy to Madame de —, of which the following is an extract ; having left out some particulars that I have already given in her life.

G 4

“MADAM,

“MADAM,

“I send you the letters of the late Madame de l’Enclos to the Marquis de Sevigné; and though I pay an intire obeisance to all your commands, I shall not deny that it is with reluctance I now venture to commit this collection into your hands.

“If you consider, that these are the only remains^f of a woman, as remarkable for the superiority of her understanding, as for the charms of her person, you may well imagine how much the good fortune of being the sole proprietor of these curious manuscripts, must raise the value of them in my estimation. Therefore, I shall reckon considerably on the acknowledgments that such a confidence has a right to claim from you.

^f I suppose that this letter was writ soon after her death, and before the works of St. Evremond had been published.

“I

“ I have only to add, that I hope the reading of these letters will not, in any sort, lessen the high opinion you have conceived of them, and which the Abbé Chateuneuf has raised in us by his Treatise on the Music of the Antients ; where he takes occasion to draw the character of Madame de l'Enclos, under the title of *Leontium*;^z and among several eulogies he has given her, particularly speaks of her talent for epistolary writing.

“ After having censured the affectation of Balzac and Voiture's styles, “ The Epistles of *Leontium* (says he) have always equally pleased, because they are really letters. Though the turn of them is singular, that they are full of reflection, and contain a great many lively passages of wit ; they have no laboured points, or constrained thoughts in them. As the reflections are always seasoned with

^z See before, for this character, in her *List*.

G 5

“ spirit,

“ spirit, and the wit never shews itself but
“ under the appearance of a free and na-
“ tural imagination, they differ very little
“ from private conversation; and it may
“ easily be perceived, that while she was
“ writing to her friends, she only thought
“ she was speaking to them.”

“ You have now, Madam, the opportunity of judging for yourself, whether these writings have deserved the character here given of them, or that the encomium proceeded from the partiality of a friend.

“ The only injunction that I shall pretend to lay you under, is to remember the promise you have given me, not to communicate the copy that I here intrust you with, to any person whatsoever: for many people who might read them, may not perhaps grant all that indulgence to the incorrectness of a female writer, which she has a just claim to.

“ Besides, what kind of entertainment could

could this choice collection afford to such an age as the present? There are neither scandal, obscenity, nor irreligion, in any part of this work; and it is found by shameful experience, that none but writings of those tendencies can engage the generality of readers, in these times.

“Madame de l’Enclos writ upon the heart, on love, and women. Engaging subjects! and who could better acquit themselves upon such topics? With that sensible philosophic turn of mind, she could not be acquainted with human nature, without studying and investigating it. You know, as well as I, that none but the most polite persons of the court were admitted into her society; that men of the greatest talents sought her friendship and converse; nay, were not ashamed even to take assistance from her opinions and advice.

“In a word, all who have spoken of her agree, that her understanding compre-

hended as many solid as agreeable qualities, and that she was a most charming philosopher, who had cloathed the best masculine sense in all the graces of the most feminine manners.

“ I have the honour to be,
“ MADAM, &c.”

As the following Collection of Letters are entirely upon the subject of gallantry, it may perhaps be expected that I shall continue the apology that I entered into just now, on my presenting the English reader with the life and character of our fair libertine ; and that before I proceed any farther, I shall defend myself for giving the public a translation of her sentiments and philosophy upon so dangerous a topic. The few words, then, that I shall offer on this head, are to be understood chiefly as a justification for myself ; but by no means designed to excuse the libertinism of those principles, from whence the maxims in the original writings are reduced.

It

It is to be observed here, that the business of gallantry, by the address of corrupt manners, has at length become a *science*, among those, who by a latitude of expression, as well as morals, are stiled the *polite* part of the world. The knowledge of this mystery, while it remained one among men, was capable of affording them too many dangerous advantages. The use of artillery, enabled those nations that were first in possession of it, to conquer and enslave their inexperienced neighbours: the secrets of play likewise tempted men to be sharpers, while ignorant and unsuspecting persons were cheated out of their fortunes. To make known, then, the address of gallantry, like publishing the art of war, or revealing the chicanery of play, must serve equally for defence, as well as attack; and may assist us to encounter our enemies upon more even and reciprocal terms.

Besides, I look upon the following series

ries of letters to be much the same in effect, with several moral discourses that lay open the frailty of human nature, point out to us what allurements the *seducer* of mankind makes use of to betray, and what foibles are most likely to tempt us into the deceiving of ourselves. And as the *knowing ourselves*, was affirmed by an oracle to be the highest wisdom, I believe that the knowledge of our weakness will be found to be our greatest strength. “So shall our strength be made perfect, even in weakness.”

For my part, I confess that I have a very good opinion of gallantry; but, without affecting the prude, 'tis a very different sort from what is described in the following letters: and I shall here take the liberty to offer my definition of it from my own sentiments, and the observations I have had some opportunities of making upon the behaviour of a few persons of gay address and polite breeding.

Gallantry

Gallantry then, is a *liberal art*, by no means synonymous with intrigue: to which it has no more relation than music, dancing, or any other accomplishment that may render persons of different sexes agreeable to each other. 'Tis a mutual warfare of coquetry, where each party endeavours to exert every qualification, merit, or faculty, that may be capable of winning the favourable opinion of the other, without, or good, or bad design; without any particular view toward matrimony or intrigue. Like the game of chess, which is so engaging, that people are fond of playing at it without a stake, as a pleasing exercise of the mind.

“And struggle for a conquest, not a prize.”

It is certain, that a commerce of this kind, between the sexes, serves to polish and improve them both; enlivens the sluggishness of mortal matter; creates attention and complacency, which are the characteristics of good-breeding; elicits every spark of genius; illumines each latent talent of the mind;

mind; weeds out the natural selfishness of the soul, and innocently and agreeably occupies that hazardous interval of life, which lies between what is stiled our entrance into the world and our settling in it.

This space is generally employed by men in sports of the field, and midnight carousals, which give a meanness to their sentiment, and a rudeness to their manners, that are as inconsistent with morals as they are with politeness. A general commerce among women, enlivened with some particular attachment, has been always thought necessary to soften the uncouthness of man's nature. But then, an intire good-breeding and perfect purity, must be preserved throughout. This sort of gallantry causes a man to exert every virtue, excellence or perfection, that either his nature or education may have given him the advantages of; and diffuses over his whole manners, mien, and deportment, a certain polite and liberal air, that distinguishes the gentleman, from the mechanic.

Most

Most part of what I have here urged, may be applied likewise to women; who have besides, this peculiar advantage from the use of gallantry, as I have here limited the expression, that it may serve to give them a management of their wit and beauty, which may help to defend them when they shall happen to be more seriously attacked.

The most innocent amusements, from perversion or excess, may terminate in vice, and gallantry may end in intrigue: but then, this event arises from the frailty of human nature, and might and has happened, in more frequent instances, where there has not been any such thing as the gallantry I have been describing, practised. The highest accomplishments may sometimes turn to our disadvantage; but then, a polite education is no more answerable for this, than my scheme, as far as I have carried it in this definition, is for the other.

There

There is a certain complacency in well-bred minds, which is much enlivened by a social intercourse of the sexes; from the consideration on one hand, of that protection and tenderness which women are in a state to claim; and the respect and deference on the other hand, which are due to men. From such reciprocal obligation I believe that polite men may often exert gallantry toward women, without the least thought of them either as mistresses or wives; and women generally receive and return such addresses with at least as innocent designs.

Such was the gallantry between Monsieur de St. Evremond and Madame de l'Enclos. He had never been one of her *lovers*, though always the highest of her *admirers*: at least, the polite and fond regard they paid to each other, as may be seen in the preceding letters, when he was ninety and she fourscore, and in different kingdoms at the same time, can never be attributed to

to an affection less pure than what I have been describing. The charms of so flattering and platonic a commerce, like the beauties of ancient writings, must be referred intirely to *taste*; for the pleasures of both arise from certain inexpressible graces, which refined sentiment or accomplished education only, can render us sensible of.

The classical taste just now alluded to, I have taken upon trust, from scholars, as I must confess myself to be wholly illiterate in all the dead languages. But this hint has happened luckily to occur to me in this place, as it may not improperly introduce a few words I have to say upon translation in general, before I conclude.

I had often heard men of letters speak most highly of the *peculiar* beauties of ancient literature, preferring it beyond measure, to the best modern compositions. This raised a vast curiosity in me to pry into

into such hidden treasure; I regretted my want of opportunities toward being instructed in the *Belles-Lettres*, and lamented my sex more sincerely upon this occasion, than ever I did upon any other, in my life; for as to the rest, I have always comforted myself with this happy reflection, that tho' we have less *liberty*, we have less *libertinism*.

I happened one evening to meet with some translations of these immortal names at a friend's house; I borrowed them with great earnestness, and retired home with the utmost impatience to peruse them. I read one, for about an hour, and grew tired; I took up a second, and yawned; but upon trying the third—I fell asleep.—I found myself disappointed. I thought all the writings flat, insipid; and on comparing them in my mind, with some of the same kinds, among our own compositions, I never once hesitated to decree the bays, in favour of the moderns; and fairly concluded, that all this partiality toward

ward the antients, was in some, but a pedantic caprice, and in others, only an early prejudice for the studies of their youth, strengthened by a particular fondness, most people are affected with, toward those things which have cost them the greatest difficulty and labour.

I continued in this error a considerable time, 'till I happened to become acquainted with a gentleman of taste, letters and sentiment, to whom I mentioned my opinion in this matter, one day that the conversation chanced to roll upon this topic. He smiled at my mistake, and told me that my disappointment must have been owing to the translations: yet, might not be imputed so much to the inability of translators, as to the insufficiency of translation itself. He then proceeded in a short essay on the subject, that gave me perfect satisfaction on this point, and pleased me so well, that I begged he would give me the

crit-

criticism in writing; which he did, and with which I here present the reader.

An Essay on CLASSIC TRANSLATION.

The reason why translations are so rarely found worth reading, is, that those who are capable of doing justice to a work of this kind, would not condescend to so servile an office. Men of genius scorn to turn interpreters.

“ Such is our pride, our folly, or our fate,
 “ That few, but those who cannot write, translate. ^a

The class of translators are generally country schoolmasters, who having more industry than genius, write more for bread than fame; and never attempt any thing farther than to present you with *their meaning* of the original. They give you literal wit without point, and grammatical sense without spirit.

^a Denham.

A

A translation, not to fall short, should rise upon the original; for wit, like meat, always requires some seasoning, upon a second dressing.^a

A good translation is the *picture*, a bad one the corpse of an author. The form, features and substance may remain; but the colour, warmth and softness are lost.

I have seen this expression, in many title pages, *faithfully* translated from the original Greek, or Latin. These are the transposers that Horace ridicules under the character of *Fidus interpretes*; or literal translators.

^a Long after these notes were written, Butler's Remains were published; and in his chapter on translators, he has hit upon the same allusion. His labours are like dishes of meat twice dress'd, that become insipid, and lose the pleasant taste they had "at first." Upon reading the Remains, I have recollected many passages in Pope, Swift, &c. that would have been deemed plagiarisms, if these writings had been published before theirs. This proves the homely saying, that *Good wits jump*.

When

When I first read Xenophon's Banquet in English, I imagined to myself that a select company of antient wits had supped together; and that the Helot that attended during the entertainment, had taken upon him to write down the conversation when he had retired into the pantry. This image may afford one a just idea of most translations I have seen. Dunster's Horace, Clarke's Sallust, Patrick's Terence, Adams's Sophocles, *any body's* Euripides; cum multis.

In truth, even the best translations may be well compared to the wrong side of tapestry; which gives us only a rough draught of the design, but conceals the whole beauty of the performance.

And indeed, where the merits of a writer consists, as in most of the classics they do, in richness of language, politeness of expression, purity of diction, or conciseness of sentence, no translation can adequately

quately convey the beauties of the original to you.

The copiousness of the dead languages often enabled the antients to express a thought by a single word, that the moderns are obliged to render by a sentence. We catch the original by intuition. *Vox non ex ore, sed ex pectore emissa.* The translation tires you with periphrasis. *Longa est ambages.*

A true taste for classic writings must be acquired from an immediate study of themselves, in their original languages. Their spirit and flavour, like the sweets of flowers, evaporate in chemistry.

So chemists boast they have a power,
From the dead ashes of a flower,
Some faint resemblance to produce,
But not the virtue, taste, or juice^a.

SWIFT,

^a See Boyle. Chapter of strange reports. Article 1.

VOL. I.

H

This

This taste too, must be early formed in our minds, before the palate has been vitiated by the poignant relish of modern wit. And even some of the *postantients*, succeeding the Augustan period, should be carefully guarded against; as also the *faux-brilliant*s of Ovid pointed out to the student.

In fine, the charms of the classic writings are not to be conveyed to us thro' the medium of modern erudition; but resemble a sixth sense, which none of the other faculties can help us to the least conception of.

The only way of coming any where near them must be by *imitation*; and yet most of the attempts that I have seen this way, appear to me but *mimickry*."

What this Gentleman has said above, with regard to the difficulty of doing justice to the inimitable beauties of the classics, may be some sort of apology for the
many

many wretched translations that have been made of them; but this can be no manner of excuse for the miserable ones there are such plenty of, from one modern language into another. Those that I could tolerably judge of, were from French into English; and I do declare that it is a perfect affront on the public, to have such men and ignorant performances imposed upon it by the insolence of editors.

As my friend above says, that the classic translations are generally done by country school-masters, I am apt to believe that all these have been made by *usbers* of boarding-schools; by the sole helps of grammar and dictionary, without the least acquaintance with the idiom of the language, or any manner of capacity for the spirit of the writer.

After I had proceeded about half way through the following letters, I was pre-

sented with a translation of them, which before I had read it, gave me a good deal of mortification, to imagine that I had thrown away so much needless trouble about them. But the perusal soon quickened my spirit for finishing the remainder. I shall here present you with some specimens of this curious piece, in order to give you a true notion of most modern versions.

In the first letter of the original, and second paragraph, after saying how capricious a thing the heart is, Ninon adds, *On croit le saisir, & l'on embrasse qu'une ombre.* Here the *usher* takes his dictionary, and finding *ombre* to give *shadow*, in English, writes it down literally so. "You think you seize the *object*, but embrace only a *shadow*."—How tediously, how flatly expressed! When I came to this passage, I was struck with an image, and not being *dictionary-bound*, I rendered *ombre* a *cloud*. "We think to grasp it, but embrace a *cloud*;" alluding to the fable of Juno and Ixion.

This

This allusion enlivens the passage, and adds a spirit to the expression. But perhaps the *usber* might have been struck with an imagery himself, at the paragraph; as the dog and bone of Æsop; which however, would have been a very mean one here: yet even so, he should have written *substance* instead of *object*; for otherwise, the contrast is not sufficiently marked—as *shadow* is itself an *object*, though not a *substance*.

In the third paragraph of the same letter, l'Enclos speaking of the danger of even a friendly intimacy between the sexes, adds L'amour est si *malin*! Now for *malin*. My *usber* sticks the pen behind his ear, spits on his thumb, and rustles through the leaves, in quest of *malin*. Well, what says old Boyer upon the article *malin*? “Why he renders it *malignant*. But this “is too near the French, and might look “too much like a learner's task—*Spiteful* “is the same sense. Pen me down *spiteful*.”

—*Write me down an afs.*^b L'amour est si malin! Love is so spiteful—Was ever such stuff as this! Love is neither *spiteful*, nor *malignant*, let Boyer say what he will.—But Cupid is a sly archer, who frequently lies on the lurch, and lets fly at us often, when we imagine ourselves quite out of his reach. This was the idea that occurred to me, upon meeting *malin* joined with *l'amour*; and this must have been the meaning of the writer. I have accordingly, given this turn, and as before, added likewise, an image to the passage. L'amour est si malin! Cupid is so sly an urchin!

Again, in the last line of letter IV. Nion advises the Marquis while meerly in pursuit of pleasure, never to engage in an amour of a woman of sense and merit, for that such an affair would not long continue a frolic of galantry; and concludes, Vous serez à votre *menage*; which my *usber* has

^b Shakespear's *Much Ado about Nothing*.

rendered,

rendered, "This would be a marriage," and literally speaking, it is so; but as *menage* is a comprehensive term, and takes in the whole of domestic œconomy, I have used the liberty of expressing the passage thus: "You may as well be married and settled in the country."

In short, I have translated Ninon by Ninon; by the spirit of her own writings; with the contexts of her life and character; leaving the pedantry of Boyer, to *Mesdemoiselles* and their *ushers*.

I shall not trouble you with any more specimens of this poor *school-boy's exercise*; for I believe you have already seen enough to agree with me, that this is rather to *traduce*, than to *translate* an author. So I shall here take my leave of the *courteous reader*, but must first intreat the favour of his *courtesy*, to believe that this publication was owing intirely to the *impor-*
H 4
tunities

tunities of friends—imperfect copies having stolen abroad, and such other quarter-begging apologies as are pleaded in most of the modern prefaces.

Adieu.

N. B. It may be observed throughout this work, that I have chosen to spell the word *galantry*, with a single *l*, but I have done so to distinguish the character of a lover from that of a soldier—*galantry* in love, from *gallantry* in war. I confess that I am not supported in this criticism, from either of the languages; for in English, the word in either sense is spelled with two *l's*; and in French, it has but one. But, I thought this orthography necessary to take away the equivocation, and to give the word a precision, which it needed before.

As the following series of letters is, if I may use such an expression, a *single banded* correspondence from *Madame de l'Enclos* to the *Marquis de Sevigné*; his letters being only implied, or alluded to in her answers; it may afford some assistance to the reader, toward a quicker conception of the scope, spirit, and design of these writings, to
frame

frame a sort of *Novel* by way of *Argument*, from the whole; referring the several parts of it, to the several letters, from whence they are deduced. This I shall attempt to do in the following pages, which may serve also for the amusement, as well as the information of my readers.

The *Marquis de Sevigné*, a young man of family and fortune, having finished his studies and exercises, been nominated to a post in the army, and just entering, as the phrase is, *into life*; complained one day, to *Madame de l'Enclos*, who was one of his friends, that he had found himself disappointed on his first setting out, with sanguine hopes and pallid fruitions: that dress, equipage, sports, camps, courts, &c. had failed his expectations, and afforded him but slight and transient pleasures. Eager in pursuit, and lukewarm in possession, he expressed some apprehensions, that his mind might not be in a sound and natural state; for that his affec-

tions and desires were but a sort of *sickly appetites* made up of *cravings and disgusts*. He made her some compliments upon her sense, knowledge and philosophy, desired her opinion upon his situation, and intreats her friendly counsels, to instruct him what scheme of life he should engage in, in order to obtain a more lively relish for pleasure.

Madame de l'Enclos told him, that the dissatisfaction of his mind, was owing to his heart having never yet experienced the solitudes of love : that without some particular attachment, some principal object, to which our thoughts, words, and actions, are ultimately to be referred, our lives would pass like dreams away, in vain pursuits, and illusive grasps.

The Marquis, struck with the subject, and charmed with the spirit of Ninon's reflections, begged she would suffer him to enter into a correspondence with her upon this topic ; which she permitted ; and accordingly,

cordingly, the next day, he wrote her a letter, wherein he places himself under her tutelage, praying her to supply him with a *chart* of life, to steer his future course by.

Her first letter is an answer to this: in which she declines the guardianship he tenders her, but offers to become his confident, to receive advices, from time to time, of the situation of his mind and affections, and to lend him the clue of her experience and counsels, to conduct him through the labyrinth of the human heart, both male and female.

In answer to this, the Marquis repeats what he had before mentioned to her, with regard to the disappointment of his *hopes*, even in the fruition of his *wishes*; and her second letter gives him the philosophy of this matter; as before hinted in their conversation upon this subject: the rest of her letters, and so on to the seventh, inclusive, sufficiently explain themselves; nor is there

any extract from them necessary to frame our novel.

The Marquis, in pursuit of a proper object to fix his affections upon, falls in love with the Countess de ---, an agreeable young widow. The progress and conduct of which passion, are the stated subjects from the eighth, to the thirtieth letter, inclusive, interspersed with variety of episodes, and philosophic sentiments; about which time, *Madame de l'Enclos* becomes acquainted accidentally with the Countess; conceives an high opinion and esteem for her sense and merits, and engages in a close connection of friendship with her.

In the thirty-first letter, the Countess gives a very lively description of the method in which she had, for some time, conducted herself, in order to defend her heart from love; but confesses at length that the merits and addresses of the Marquis, had won her affections.

Madame

Madame de l'Enclos, apprehending some danger for her new ally, from her avowed passion, and the assiduities of the Marquis; lest she might be won upon *unequal terms*, supports her virtue by her counsels, and baffles all the arts of her lover; hinting at the same time, that more honourable conditions would be willingly accepted of. These particulars form the subject of the thirty-second, to the forty-eighth letter, inclusive.

The Marquis, in despair of winning the Countess, upon his own terms, quits the pursuit, and engages in a libertine course of life. *Madame de l'Enclos*, finding it impossible to withhold him, for the present, seems to enter into schemes of pleasures, with the design of preserving her sway over him, in hope of reclaiming him again, in favour of her fair friend. In order to which, she endeavours to give him an unfavourable impression of the *Financiere*, his first amour, and recommends
inconstancy

constancy in his galantries, by way of preventing any particular attachment to detain him too long from the chaste and rational scheme of happiness she had in view for him. This is the scope of letter forty-nine, and so *en suite*, to the fifty-third, inclusive.

At length, she communicates to him a letter she had received from the Countess, where she declares, in disgust at his behaviour, her resolution of quitting the world, and retiring to pass the remainder of her life at her own estate, in the country. This revived his former passion, and awakened sentiment; he had become tired and ashamed of the profligate dissipation in which he had lately squandered away his time, and character; throws himself at her feet, she relents, they are happy; and so conclude the series, and the novel.

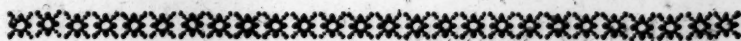
THE



THE
LETTERS
OF

Mademoiselle Ninon de l'Enclos

TO THE
Marquis de Sevigné.



LETTER I.

HOW Marquis! Charge me with the
care of your education! To guide
you in the course you are now to steer!
This is really, expecting too much from
my friendship for you. You know that
when a woman who has passed her prime,
is observed to pay any particular attention
toward a young man, they immediately
cry,

ery. *She means to enter him into life*; and you are not ignorant of the malicious intimation with which they throw out such kind of expressions.

I will not therefore, expose myself to the hazard of such ridicule. All that I can do for your service is to become your confident: you shall communicate to me every situation of your mind; on each occasion I will freely give you my sentiments, and shall endeavour to assist you in becoming acquainted with your own heart, as well as that of woman.

Notwithstanding the amusement which I promise myself in this correspondence, I shall not dissemble the difficulties I apprehend in my enterprize. This same heart, which is to be the subject of my lectures, is such a composition of contrast, that whoever attempts to treat of it must unavoidably appear to fall into contradictions. We think to grasp it, but *embrace a cloud*. A
very

very camelion! viewed in different lights, it exhibits opposite colours; which nevertheless, exist together in the same subject.

You must then, prepare yourself to hear many singularities, upon which I shall offer you my own conclusions; and if they should happen to appear to you rather new than just, you are at liberty to rate them accordingly.

I have, besides, a delicate scruple about this undertaking; for I foresee that I can hardly be sincere, without detracting a little from the *romance* of my sex. But, you would know what are my opinions about love, and all that relates to it; and I shall muster up resolution enough to deliver you my thoughts ingenuously, upon this subject.

I am to spend this evening at Monsieur de la Rochefaucault's, with La Fontaine and Madame de la Sabliere. If you will
be

be of our party, Fontaine shall entertain you with two new fables, which they say do by no means fall off from the spirit of his former compositions in that way. Prithee meet us Marquis. But hold—Have I nothing to apprehend from the commerce we are entering into? Cupid is so sly an urchin! Let me examine my heart—All safe—'Tis otherwise engaged; and the sentiments it is affected with toward you, are more a-kin to friendship, than to love. But at the worst, if any such caprice should hereafter happen to seize me, we must endeavour to retrieve ourselves from so unlucky an adventure, with the best address we can.

We are going then to enter into a course of morality.—Yes Marquis; of morality. But that this expression may not too much alarm you, we shall engage in no other branch of it but love alone; and this is known to have too great an influence
on

on the manners of mankind, not to deserve a particular study.

This scheme of ours diverts me vastly. But shall I not mortify you sometimes? This is another of my fears: for you know that I am an unmerciful reasoner when I set about it. With any other kind of heart than my own, I should have made the most rigid philosopher that ever was recorded. Adieu. Let us begin whenever you please.

LETTER II.

YES, Marquis, I will keep my word with you; and upon all occasions shall speak the truth, though I must sometimes tell it at my own expence. I have more firmness of mind than perhaps you may imagine; and 'tis very probable, that in the course of this correspondence, you will think I push this quality too far, even to severity. But then please to remember that I have only the outside of a woman,

woman, and that my heart and mind are wholly masculine.

Observe the method I design to make use of in this commerce between us. As I desire nothing more than to be rightly understood, before I communicate my opinions, I shall propose them to that excellent person with whom we supped last night. 'Tis true, indeed, that he has not much prejudice in favour of poor human nature, and has as little faith in virtue, as in sprites; but then his severity, mitigated by my indulgence for human frailty, will give you, I believe, both the kind and portion of philosophy that may be necessary in a commerce with women.

Let us proceed now, to the remainder of your letter. You say that since you have entered into life, you have been continually disappointed; your enjoyments fall short of expectations; disgust and weariness pursue you every where. You fly to
solitude,

solitude, but grow tired when you arrive at it: you know not, in short, to what can be attributed the restlessness that afflicts you.

I am going then, to put you out of pain about that point; for I have taken upon me to give you my thoughts with regard to every affection of your mind; though perhaps, you may often start questions which may embarrass me as much as they do you.

That inquietude, that impatience, you complain of in yourself, proceeds intirely from the vacancy in your heart: It is void of love, and it was formed to receive it. You are absolutely, as one may say, under a necessity of loving. Yes, Marquis, nature has given us all a certain *quota* of affection, which we must exercise upon some particular object. Your time of life is adapted to the emotions of love; and 'till your heart has experienced these fond sensations,

sations, you will ever feel there, a painful vacuity: there will be no end to that lassitude you complain of. In a word, love is the aliment of the heart, as food is of the body. To love, is to fulfil the scope of nature. 'Tis the submitting to a fate.

But if possible, endeavour to avoid that kind of love which rises to a passion: to prevent this *misfortune* I am almost tempted to second the advice that has been already given you, to prefer the company of those women who set up for nothing more than being entertaining triflers, before those dangerous charmers who are capable of inspiring as much esteem as love. At your age of life, one need not think of entering into a serious engagement: you have no occasion then, to seek for friendship in a woman; you have nothing to look for but an agreeable mistress.

The society of ladies of refined sentiment,

ment, or those whom the ravages of time have deprived of every thing they could value themselves upon, except their intellectual qualities, does well enough for men, who like them are upon the decline.

But for you, such women would be really *too good company*, if I may express myself thus. We have no occasion for riches, but in proportion to our wants. All you have to do at present, is to attach yourself to one, who joined to an amiable person, has a politeness in her manners, a lively disposition, a taste for social pleasures, and whom a little sympathy of affections would not much alarm.

You may urge perhaps, that in the opinion of a rational man, such women must appear too trifling: but do you think they are to be judged of with such severity? Be assured Marquis, that if unfortunately, they should happen to acquire a more solid

lid character, both they and you would be considerable losers by the bargain.

You require estimable qualities in women! Prithee, can't you find them in a friend? Shall I speak plainly to you? 'Tis not our sense or virtues, but our gaiety and foibles that you have occasion for. The passion you might conceive for a woman of true merit, would be dangerous to you. 'Till you have entered into the *sober* scheme of matrimony, you should seek for amusement meerly, among women: a light affection only should engage you. Beware of a serious attachment, for I prophesy that you will make but a bad end of it.

If you did not think in a much graver way, than the generality of young men, I should perhaps speak to you in a different manner. But I perceive that you are ready to fall into the contrary extreme from their inconsiderateness. You should then only
attach

attach yourself to a woman, who like an amiable child, can amuse you by entertaining follies, slight caprices, and all the pretty failings that make the pleasures of an affair of galantry.

Shall I tell you what makes love so dangerous? 'Tis the too high idea we are apt to frame of it. But, to speak the truth, love, considered as a passion, is meerly a blind instinct, that we should rate accordingly: 'Tis an appetite which inclines us to one object rather than another, without our being able to account for our taste. Considered as the bond of friendship, where reason presides, it is no longer a passion, and loses the very name of love. It becomes esteem: which is indeed a very pleasing affection, but too tranquil; and therefore, incapable of rousing you from your present supineness.

If you madly trace the footsteps of our antient heroes in romance, adopting their

extravagant sentiments, you will soon experience that such false chivalry, metamorphoses this charming passion into a melancholy folly, nay often a tragical one: a perfect phrenzy! But divest it of all the borrowed pomp of opinion, and you will then perceive how much it will contribute both to your happiness and pleasure. Be assured, that if either reason or *knight errantry* should be permitted to form the union of our hearts, love would become a state of apathy and madness.

The only way to avoid these extremes, is to pursue the course I have pointed out to you. At present, you have no sort of occasion for any thing more than meer amusement; and believe you will not meet it, except among women of the character I speak of. Your heart wants occupation; and they are framed to supply the void. At least, give my prescription a fair trial, and I will be answerable for the success.

I pro-

I promised to reason with you, and I think I have kept my word. Farewel. I have just received an agreeable letter from Monsieur de St. Evremond, that I must answer immediately. I shall write him the sentiments I have mentioned to you, on this subject, and I am much deceived if he does not agree with my opinion.

To-morrow the Abbé Chateaufneuf, and perhaps Moliere, are to be with me. We are to read over the Tartuffe^c together, in order to make some necessary alterations. Depend upon it, Marquis, that whoever denies the maxims I have here laid down to you, partakes a little of that character in his play.

Adieu.

^c The Hypocrite.

L E T T E R III.

NOtwithstanding all I have said, you seem to adhere to your first prejudices. You would have a mistress that you could respect and esteem, and who might at the same time become your friend. Such sentiments are certainly very commendable, if upon trial they could produce that happiness which one might reasonably expect from them. But experience will soon convince you that these fine expressions are but empty sounds.

For meerly an amusement of the mind, must it be necessary to hunt after important qualities? The reading of romances has almost impaired your understanding! The poor Marquis! he has suffered himself to be dazzled with the sublime *theorems* which are often the subjects of conversation. But my dear friend, to what account will all these *rational chimeras* turn? I shall

I shall freely give you my opinion of them. They are really most beautiful *counters*; and oh the pity that they are not current!

When you design to enter upon a settled plan of life, look out for a woman of good sense, true virtue, and high principles: all these are perfectly consistent with the dignity—I had almost said the *gravity*—of a married state. But while galantry is your scheme, beware of growing serious, and give credit to what I tell you. I know what will agree with you, better than you do yourself.

In general, men pretend that they covet essential qualities in love. Ignorant as they are, how much disappointed would they be if they should meet with them! What would they gain by being edified, when it was amusement only they had occasion for? Such a rational mistress as you contend for, would be—a wife—for whom I acknowledge you might conceive

an infinite deal of *respect*. But prithee, what's become of the fondness? Gone! A woman estimable in all particulars, would subject, would humble you too much, to suffer you to love her long. Compelled to esteem, even to admire her sometimes, you could not avoid ceasing to love her soon. So much excellence would be a reproach direct, a critic too severe upon your own failings, not to make your pride revolt in time: and when once that is mortified, farewell love.

Analize your sentiments strictly, examine closely into your own heart, and you will find this maxim true. I have but a moment to bid you adieu.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

UPON my word, Marquis, you will at last put me past my patience. Lord, how stupid you are sometimes! I have your letter before me. You do not apprehend me. Attend a little better to what I say. I did not tell you that you should chuse a fool for your mistress: nothing could be farther from my sentiments. But I said, that in reality you had no manner of occasion for any thing more at present, than an amusing occupation of heart and mind; and that to render such an engagement agreeable, one need not insist upon very extraordinary qualities.

I repeat it again—In love, men should look for nothing farther than amusement solely; and I believe, upon such a subject as this, that my opinion may obtain some credit. A little peculiarity of temper, a slight caprice, or a childish quarrel,

have frequently greater effect on men, and attach them more strongly than the most rational or solid characters.

A person, whom you highly esteem for the strength and justness of his sentiments,^d said once before me, that "caprice was annexed to beauty, to be its counter-poison."^e I fought him out upon his maxim, as I am fully of opinion, that *caprice was joined to beauty, to animate its charms, and to enhance their value by adding spirit and poignancy.*^f

There

^a La Bruyere.

^e Doctor Young, in one of his satires upon women, has framed a distich upon this thought.

"An antidote in female caprice lies,

"Kind Heaven! against the poison of their eyes."

Univ. Paf.

^f I have met with a pretty allusion upon this subject. "The caprices of beauty may be compared to shrubs that sometimes occur in laying out an improvement; which though out of rule to plant there,

There is no sentiment more cold, or of shorter continuance, than admiration. We grow insensibly indifferent to the same *set* of features, tho' ever so beautiful; and if there be not a little quickening spirit, to give them life and action, their very uniformity will soon destroy the sentiments they at first excited. A little change of temper is absolutely necessary, to give to a fine woman that happy variety which prevents our growing weary of finding her always the same. In truth, 'tis unlucky enough for a woman to have too even a disposition; the equality of her temper permits indifference to arise—perhaps disgust.

“there, would be want of taste to root out.” *Series of letters between Henry and Frances.*

I like this sentiment better than either of the others. The first says that caprice destroys love—the second, that it cherishes it. But the latter, that it is neither to be wished in or out of a pretty woman's composition. And in truth, it helps to form that kind of character, which made the poet cry out,

“There is no living with thee—or without thee!”

'Tis always the same statue; and a man continues his own master—perfectly at ease before her. She is so reasonable, so gentle, that she deprives one even of the liberty of squabbling with her; and that liberty is sometimes so great a pleasure!

Place in her stead, a woman, lively, uncertain, froward—but these only to a certain degree.—The scene is shifted: the lover meets in the same person with all the charms of variety. Caprice is the salt of galantry, that preserves it from corrupting. Inquietudes, jealousies, quarrels, piques, and reconciliations, are, if not the *diet*, at least the *exercise* of love. Inchanting variety! that fills and occupies the sensible heart more charmingly, than all the regularity of deportment, and tedious sameness of what are deemed the *better characters*.

I know how to deal with you men. A little change of temper throws you into
uncer-

uncertainty, and gives you as much difficulty and uneasiness to dissipate, as if it were a victory to be gained over a new mistress. A little hurry now and then, keeps you in wind: you will struggle, and also conquer, and be overcome, by turns. In vain poor reason sighs! you cannot conceive how such a *meteor* should lead you so implicitly about: every one tells you that the idol of your affections is a compound of vanity and caprice.—But, 'tis a spoiled child, and you cannot rid yourself of a childish fondness for it! Even those efforts that reflection may force you to make in order to set you free, will often serve but to bind your chain the faster. For love is never so strong, as when we imagine it ready to break from the resentment of a quarrel. Its throne is tempest—and its state convulsion! Reduce it to the government of reason—it languishes! it expires!

Upon the whole, I would not advise you to chuse a mistress whose sense and merit

merit are predominant, but one whose humour sometimes bears sway, and silences proud reason. Otherwise, be assured that it will not long continue a frolic of galantry; and you may as well be married, and settled in the country.

These are my last words.

Adieu.

LETTER V.

YES. I agree with you Marquis, that a woman who is only a composition of whim and caprice, would make but a disagreeable companion, and must disgust in the end. I acknowledge also, that a constant irregularity of temper would turn your amour, your metaphorical warfare, into a literal one. But then indeed, it was not to a person of such characters that I advised you to attach yourself. You always overshoot the mark.

In my last letter, I described an agreeable woman, who might be rendered still more

more engaging, by a little inequality of temper, with a tincture of coquetry, &c. And you seem to speak to me of an arrant shrew, that is continually untoward and perverse. What different characters are here! When I mentioned *humour*, I meant only that kind which arises from an earnestness of spirit, a certain impatience of manner, with perhaps, a little disposition to jealousy. In a word, such a one as is born of love itself, and not the offspring of a natural perverseness, that is frequently stiled *humour*.⁸

When 'tis love that renders a woman unreasonable; when 'tis that alone which urges her impatience, what man can be so void of delicacy or sentiment, to complain? Do such extravagances not prove the violence of the passion? For my

⁸ In English, this point is very well distinguished, by stiling this latter character *humoursome*.

part, I shall never be persuaded that whoever can contain themselves within very reasonable bounds, were ever much in love. Can we be really so without suffering ourselves to be hurried away by the transports of an heart-felt affection? without being sensible of all those agitations which it necessarily creates. No surely.—And who can perceive all these emotions in the beloved object, without a flattering pleasure? While they are rendered uneasy by her suspicions and resentments, they feel with a secret delight, that they are beloved—that they are loved with passion. And such capricious behaviour is so much further a convincing proof, as it is involuntary.

This, my dear Marquis, is the secret charm that pays the lover's pains and dries his tears. But, if you could imagine I should tell you that an ill-tempered, absurd virago, could

could supply the pleasures of love, I beg you would undeceive yourself forthwith.

I said indeed, and shall ever persist in my opinion, that there must be a little peculiarity of temper, some caprice, and a sensible emotion in a commerce of gallantry, to prevent it from growing languid, and to make it last. But it is very certain, that these seasonings will not naturally answer the end, except where they proceed from love alone.

If a particularity of *humour* arises solely from untoward nature, from a difficult, uneasy or froward disposition, I should be in haste to pronounce it, that such a perverse temper must soon render a woman hateful, and occasion the most disgusting quarrels. Such an union must become a real chain, from which one should endeavour to extricate themselves as quick as possible.

Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

YOU think then, Sir, that you have urged one invincible argument against me, by saying that it is not in our power to bestow our affections where we please; and that consequently, you are not at liberty to chuse the object of your attachment. What a strange moral is here! Prithee leave this common place maxim to those women who are reduced to plead it as an apology for their own weakness. They must have something foreign to lay the blame upon, in order to escape the censure themselves. Somewhat like the voluptuary that Montaigne mentions, who when pinched by the gout, used to cry out, *that cursed ham!* It was a stroke of sympathy, say they, too powerful to resist—Can we over-rule the impulses of our hearts? There is a destiny! &c.

All objections, to be sure, must be silenced, when such very notable arguments as they have been offered; and these opinions have actually gained so much credit in

in the world, that one must enter the lists against a multitude, who would attempt to refute them. But such maxims are so generally received, only because it is the interest of many to have them universally believed.

People are not aware, that such excuses, instead of justifying their weakness, are a professed acknowledgment that they were rather inclined to indulge themselves in it. For my part, I take the liberty of dissenting from the common opinion in this particular. It is sufficient to affirm that it is not impossible, at least, to conquer our inclinations, in order to condemn those which are dishonourable or absurd.

Pray have we not known many women *over-rule the impulse of their hearts*; after they have discovered that the object of their regards has been deemed unworthy of them? How many others have stifled the most tender passion, and sacrificed it to the conveniences

ences of a settlement? Flight, time and absence, are remedies, to which the strongest *impulses* must, at length, submit. They grow weaker by degrees, till at last, the fond impression wears insensibly away.

I acknowledge, that to acquit one's self with success in such a difficulty, requires the full exertion of our prudence and philosophy. I imagine, however, that the improbability we are too apt to apprehend in such a conflict, may often deprive us even of the courage to attempt it: so that though I affirm there is no inclination unsurmountable in speculation, I must admit there are few that are really conquered in practice. But then, this is owing intirely, to our not adventuring to enter the lists with our passions and foibles.^h

How.

^h Here is an admirable lecture against the *pleaded* frailty of our natures; which proceeding from the mouth of a libertine, may probably have better effect

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However, to wave any further dispute upon this subject, and as our argument at present, is meerly on the topic of galantry, it would be impertinent to put you upon the struggle with any particular inclination you may conceive for a woman more or less amiable: but then, as you have not yet entered into any engagement, I only mean to point out to you the character that is most likely to answer the purpose of such an adventure.

It were most devoutly to be wished, that some juster sentiments, or more real merit, had a greater sway over your hearts and minds: that they were capable of filling up the void for the present, and also of fixing your constancy for life. But, experience has evinced that such a hope is
vain.

fect than the strongest writings of more severe moralists. There are, interspersed through these letters, several reflections of the same kind, which may serve to strengthen the apology I have before made, for offering a translation of this work to the public.

vain. I do not reason then, upon what ye ought to be, but what in sad truth, ye are. My design is only to give ye the knowledge of your hearts, as they are in reality, constituted; not such as I could wish indeed, they were.

I am myself, the first to lament the depravity of your tastes, however indulgent I may be to the irregularity of your appetites: but not being able to reform the follies of your hearts, I would instruct you to make the best of their weaknesses. Finding it impossible to make you wise, I can only attempt to render you happy.

It is an old saying, that *to destroy the passions, would be to annihilate us*: all we can do, is to regulate them. They are in our hands, what poisons are in pharmacy; which under the management of a skilful chymist, may be wrought up into salutary medicines.

Adieu.

LETTER

L E T T E R VII.

AND who doubts, Marquis, but it is a real merit that renders ye agreeable to women? All I desire to know is, what idea you have affixed to that expression? Do you, by *real merit*, intend a solid understanding, nice discernment, great erudition, prudence, discretion—in short, an *heap* of extraordinary qualities that more frequently *incumber*, than render ye happy or successful? If these be your sentiments about *merit*, we certainly can never understand each other.

Reserve such cardinal virtues for your commerce among men.—They have agreed upon the barter of such commodities. But, in galantry, exchange these rare and superior excellencies for more common and familiar qualifications.—These are the only *specie*, that have credit in such a traffic. And be their intrinsic value never so low, they

they cease to be *counters*, when they have obtained a *currency*: for, true merit consists less, perhaps, in real perfection, than in what the world have agreed to receive as such.

It is much more convenient to be master of qualities agreeable to those we wish to please, than to possess others that even those very persons themselves, may acknowledge more estimable. In a word, we must copy the manners, and imitate the foibles of those we associate with, if we would live with ease or satisfaction among them.

What is the proper destination of women? what is the *role* you allow them in your drama? is it not to sooth, to please, to charm? The advantages of person, the graces of mien, a liveliness in conversation, with a politeness of manners, are the surest qualifications for compassing these ends: women possess these accomplishments in
the

the supreme degree ; and 'tis in these they would have you likewise to excel. Call them triflers, if ye dare.—They perform the highest part who are formed and destined to render ye happy.

Is it not truly, to the charms of our converse, and complacency of our manners, that you are indebted for your sincerest pleasures, for all the social virtues ; in a word, your intire well being ? Answer me ingenuously ; learning, ambition, riches, valour, even friendship itself, of which, and with reason, you so much boast ; are any, or all of these together, capable of rendering you perfectly happy ? Or at least, the pleasures you receive from them, are they lively enough even to make you tolerably so ? Doubtless no.—All these together joined, would not be able to rid you of that stupid sameness of life which is so apt to oppress you ; and ye must have in truth, remained the most pitiable creatures alive !

But

But 'tis the peculiar province of women to dissipate this mortal languor by the lively seasonings of their converse, and the charms they are capable of diffusing o'er galantry. A fond folly, a flattering hope, or an ardent wish, are the only things that can awaken your attention, and give you a true sense of happiness. For surely, Marquis, there is a vast difference between *meerly possessing* our good fortune, and *relishing* the pleasures of that enjoyment.

The bare necessities of life can only make a man *easy*; 'tis superfluity that renders him *rich*; or makes him sensible he is so. 'Tis not superior qualities alone, that make us amiable: 'tis perhaps a fault to be master of none but what are of real value. To be well received in the world, one must be agreeable, entertaining, serviceable to the pleasures of others. I promise you that there is no succeeding in general, but particularly with women, except by these means.

Pray

Pray tell me, what business have we with your over-grown knowledge, the depth of your judgment, or the extent of your learning? If you possess only such advantages, if some slighter and more familiar talents do not soften and polish their uncouthness—I have ta'en the poll—So far from pleasing, you will appear a most formidable *censor* to them; and the restraint you will lay them under, must banish from their converse all that freedom, gaiety, and ease, in which they would naturally indulge themselves before persons of less account: nay, the very despair of succeeding, would hinder them even from attempting to render themselves agreeable to men of a certain coldness in their manners, who are apt to examine every thing with the calmness of philosophy, and will not permit themselves a careless freedom in conversation. The ease and cheerful sweets of social intercourse, is only to be enjoyed among those who are as heed-

less and unguarded as ourselves, affording us the same reciprocal advantages over them.

In fine, too much circumspection has the like effect upon our minds, that a cold air has upon our bodies. Reserve shuts up the door of their hearts with whom we converse, and makes them cautious how they unfold them. You must then beware, Marquis, of striking a damp upon galantry, by affecting to exhibit yourself only in your most important light. You may have read that people more often please by agreeable failings, than by the most essential qualities. Great merits are like large pieces of gold, which we make less use of than of smaller coin.*

* Swift has the same expression with regard to learned men: "Though they have quadruples in their purses, they are frequently at a loss for ready change."

Thoughts on Various Subjects.

This

This thought makes me recollect certain nations, who instead of sterling metals, carry on their traffic intirely with shells. Now, prithee, don't you think these people are as rich as we, with all the bullion of the new world? One might at first, be apt to mistake their riches for poverty, 'till we reflect that gold and silver receive their value from our opinion only; and that our coin, among those people, would but serve for counters.

The qualities that you deem essential, are to be rated after the same manner, in galantry: we have occasion there, only for shells, and what signifies the medium of traffic, while the commerce is carried on?

My conclusion then, is fairly this. If it be true, which you cannot doubt, that your chief happiness must arise from the society of women, be assured that you can never render yourself agreeable to

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them, but by such qualities as are analogous to their own.

I return again. You men affect to value yourselves upon your sciences, learning, judgment, &c. &c.—But tell me ingenuously, how irksome would your lives become, if ye were condemned to be always rational, learned, solid, and to spend your time intirely among philosophers? I know ye perfectly well; ye would grow very soon tired of admiring one another; and formed of such stuff as ye are, ye would more readily resign your excellencies, than your pleasures.

Therefore, prithee don't deceive yourself by endeavouring to pass for a person of importance, in the sense you mistake it. True merit is that only, which is so esteemed by those we would desire to please. Galantry has its peculiar laws, Marquis. Agreeable fellows are the only *sages* of that province.

Adieu.

LETTER

L E T T E R VIII.

I Perceive, Marquis, that you have not very far to travel. Your hour is arrived at last. The account you give of yourself, sufficiently proves you to be at length, in love: and the young widow you mention, is indeed very capable of inspiring that passion. The Chevalier de - - - - has given me a very advantageous description of her. But the moment you begin to be sensible of the least inquietude, you reproach me for the advice I have given you! The uneasiness that arises in our breasts, with the other evils occasioned by love, appear you say, more to be dreaded, than all its pleasures are to be desired.

There are, 'tis true, a sober kind of people, who think the pains, at least equal to the joys. But not to enter into a tedious disquisition on this subject, let me offer

fer you my own opinion about the matter. Love then, is a passion, or emotion of the soul, neither good or evil in its own nature: it rests intirely upon the experience of its votaries, who according as they have been differently affected, resolve it, some into an evil, and others into a good.

All that I need say in its favour, is, that it is attended with one circumstance, which all the inconveniences imputed to it, cannot be able to counterpoise. It relieves us from supineness, it quickens us, and is so far, of immediate advantage. I believe I told you before, that our hearts are formed for emotion; and whatever rouses or actuates them, may be said to answer the design of nature. Oh! what is life, without the relief of love? A tedious maulady! 'Tis not existence—Vegetation only!

Love is to our minds, what winds are to the sea. They often raise storms there indeed, and sometimes occasion shipwrecks:
but

but then, 'tis they which render it navigable: and the very agitation they produce, is necessary to preserve its virtues;^b and if they render the voyage dangerous, 'tis the pilot's business to provide against the hazard.

I return to my subject: and though your delicacy may be offended at my frankness, I shall add, that besides the necessity we labour under, of something to keep us awake, we have within us, a certain physical and necessary cause of love. Perhaps it may not be proper for a woman to speak this language to you. You know. I do not speak so plainly in general; but, we are not holding a polite conversation — we are only philosophizing. If my pro-

^b Philosophers say, that if it was not for the fluctuation of the ocean, its salts would subside, thereby rendering the waters unfit for that peculiar species of animals which are framed to inhabit them; and would stagnate, at length, to putrefaction.

positions appear sometimes too abstruse for a woman, remember what I told you in one of my former letters.^c As soon as I was capable of reason, I took upon myself to examine which of the sexes had the advantage;^d and finding the distribution to lie

^c Letter II. paragraph 1.

^d *Had the advantage.* The French expression is, étoit le mieux partagé, which the former *traducer* of these letters, mentioned in my preface, without the least authority from sense or dictionary, renders thus, *was the most numerous*. But, the whole passage is in the same stile, and may amuse the reader. Dès que j'ai fait usage de ma raison, je me suis mis en tête d'examiner lequel des deux sexes étoit le mieux partagé : j'ai vu que les hommes ne s'étoient point du tout maltraités dans la distribution des rôles, & je me suis faite *homme*. "Since the time I began to make use of my reason, I have taken it into my head to examine which of the two sexes *was the most numerous* : I have observed that yours had no reason to complain of being ill used in the distribution of the register, and therefore I have thought it *no injustice* to commence a man."

I wish heartily there was an attorney-general appointed in the republic of letters, to prosecute such
notorious

lie mostly in your favour, I immediately commenced *man*.

Under this character then, I need not enquire whether it is right or wrong to admit the passion of love: we might as well enter into a disquisition about thirst; and caution all the world against drinking, because some people are apt to get drunk. Since then, it is not a matter within your own election, whether you shall have an appetite conformable to the mechanical construction of your natures, or no; away with romantic notions, and never perplex yourself with computations upon the more or less advantages of loving. Make use of this passion in the manner I have recommended to you—Let it be your *amusement*—but never your *occupation*.

notorious offenders against the state. To render them for ever incapable of holding any employ in literature; either as author, translator, or even compiler, transcriber, printer, or prompter.

I expect here that you will overwhelm me again, with your high-flown principles, and tell me, that it is not in our power to arrest the current of our affections at whatever point we may chuse to limit them. But observe, that I consider those who talk after this manner, in the same light I do persons who think themselves obliged in honour to express an hearty affliction on account of some loss which other people perhaps, look upon to be very considerable. They know, at the same time, that they ought rather to take consolation; but find a sort of satisfaction in their grief. They love to feel that their hearts are capable of carrying a sentiment to excess, and this reflection softens them still more. They nourish, they idolize their affliction, and render it incense from habit.

Just so your sublime lovers, with sentiments overstrained by prudery or romance, make it a point of honour with themselves,

selves, to spiritualize their passion. From the reinforcements of delicacy they adopt a kind of galant superstition, to which they are more strongly devoted, as it is a religion of their own making. In fine, they become at length, ashamed of descending to common sense, and appearing rational creatures.

Prithee Marquis, do not suffer yourself to be hurried into such ridiculous lengths as these. Such elevated notions are looked upon by the present age, as either foolish or affected. Formerly, they took it into their heads that love was to be a serious, a sublime passion, and esteemed only in proportion to its dignity—Give dignity to a child, and what will become of its graces? What a ridiculous and inconsistent character would you make of it!

I have really, vast compassion for our poor unfortunate ancestors. What was with them a languishing distemper, a

melancholic madness, is among us, but a gay folly, or a pleasant dream. Bewitching as they were to prefer the horror of rocks and deserts to all the beauties of a flowered parterre ! What absurd prejudices has the habit of reflection thrown to the ground !

To prove that such sublime conceptions are but the chimeras of prepossession or pride, it need only be observed, that we no longer perceive any taste now amongst us, for that sort of mystic galantry, nor ever hear in the present times, of such gigantic passions. Apply but ridicule to the best established opinions, even to those we think the most natural, and you will find that both one and the other shall often vanish away, and leave us astonished that some ideas we had idolized in our minds, should be found in truth, but empty notions, which took their turns of change, like idle fashions.*

There-

* Shaftesbury has proposed *ridicule*, as a test of truth. Perhaps he had taken the hint from this passage,

Therefore good Marquis, do not alarm yourself with prophetic conjectures upon the event of your attachment to the charming Countess, and you will perceive in the end that love in reality, such as can render us happy, instead of being considered as a very solemn affair, should be treated as no serious matter at all; and particularly, ought ever to be conducted with gaiety. Nothing will prove the truth of this maxim, better than the event of your adventure; for I fancy that the Countess is a woman by no means susceptible of grave impressions, and your sublime sentiments will give her the vapours, remember I tell you so.

passage, as these letters were published in his time: but, he has carried the sentiment too far. Every thing that is not capable of mathematical certainty, may be made a subject of cavil; and yet there are *truths*, which cannot be *demonstrated*. Moral philosophy all men are agreed in, yet Aristophanes in his comedy of the *Clouds*, rendered Socrates the jest of Athens. Is every thing ridiculous, that a buffoon laughs at?

My

My disorder continues still. I had a great mind to tell you that I shall not go abroad all day : but would not this be a kind of assignation? However, if you will come and give me your opinion of Racine's Bajazet, I shall be very well pleased with your company. They say that La Chammelay¹ has excelled herself, in that performance.

I have read my letter over, Marquis, and it puts me out of humour with you. I find gravity is infectious ; and you may judge how much your mistress must have been affected with it, when you have communicated it to me, even while I was endeavouring to cure you of the distemper. There is something singular in this, that to prove love ought to be treated with cheerfulness, I should be obliged to assume a serious air.

Adieu.

¹ A famous actress.

LETTER IX.

YOU have then taken what I said in my last letter, most heinously ill? I have prophaned the divinity of love, and most impiously degraded that dignity, by reducing his empire to a vulgar appetite. As for you Marquis, you have more elevated notions of this passion: what passes in your own breast is a proof of it. You have no sort of sensation beyond that pure and delicate affection which occupies your whole soul. *To behold the Countess, to hold tender converse with her, to listen to the soft melody of her voice, to render her little assiduities*—These, the only scope and extent of your wishes; and these alone, sufficient to constitute your supreme felicity. Far be it from you those vulgar sentiments, I so unworthily substitute in the place of your sublime metaphysics: thoughts only becoming of terrestrial minds, attached simply to the gross pleasures of sense? What
an

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an error must I be in! Could I imagine the Countess was a woman to be won, by motives so unworthy of her? And to give the least hint of such mean sentiments in yourself, would it not be to expose you to her scorn, her hatred, &c. &c.

My philosophy then, has given you to apprehend all these sad misfortunes—My poor Marquis! How have you deceived yourself by your ignorance of the genuine cause of your sentiments! Will you lend me your whole attention? I would rescue you from an error: but with that solemn air which is answerable to the great importance of the subject I am entering upon. I mount the tripod! I feel the presence of the deity! I am inspired! I rub my forehead, like one who meditates deep mysteries, and am just going to pronounce oracles! Let us reason in form.

Mankind, from I know not what caprice, have affixed a certain shame to that
reci-

reciprocal inclination which nature has given to the sexes: They were sensible, however, that they could not absolutely stifle its voice. What's to be done in so difficult a case? Why truly, they endeavoured to substitute the outward shew of an affection purely spiritual, to the humbling necessity of appearing honestly to satisfy an appetite. Insensibly they became accustomed to occupy themselves in a thousand *little sublime nothings*.—But did not stop here—For at length, they began really to believe that all this *accessary* trifling, effects of an overheated imagination, constituted the intire essence of this passion. Behold now, love elevated among heroics! At least, they have lent it the appearance of one: but, let us break through the imposition, and take an example.

Two lovers at the commencement of their amour, imagine themselves inspired with the most delicate sentiments: they exhaust all the refinements, the exaggerations,

tions and enthusiasm of the highest seraphics ; and are for a time, enamoured with the idea of their own excellence. But, let us attend them thro' the whole course of their connection, and we shall soon perceive that nature will call in for its share. In a short time their vanity, satisfied with the shew of these *alembic* notions, leaves the heart at liberty to feel and explain its real sentiments ; and notwithstanding their refined contempt for the vulgar pleasures of sense, a time will come when this pair of platonic may be much surprized to find themselves, after a tedious circuit, at the same point with the most ordinary peasant, who would honestly have begun just where they left off.

Retrieve yourself then, from your error : abandon your chimera : keep your refined sentiments intirely for friendship. Set no higher value upon love, than what it deserves. The more dignity you allow it, the more dangerous it becomes ; and the
more

more sublime your ideas of it rise, the farther they are from being just.

Take a person's word for it, who is perfectly acquainted with the human heart. "If a man thinks, says he, that he loves his mistress for her sake only, he is extremely mistaken."*

LETTER X.

THE discourse, then, that the Countess held with you, upon the delicacy which she required in a lover, has startled you. You imagine she will always be as severe as she appears to you at present. All I have said is not sufficient to keep up your spirits. You think you do me favour in barely doubting of my maxims. If you dare speak out, you will condemn them entirely.

I believe, you in earnest, when you speak

* Rochefaucalt.

after

after this manner. It is not your fault if you do not see clearly into the business you are about: but in proportion as you advance, the cloud will dissipate, and you will perceive with surprise the truths I had before pronounced to you.

While your passion remains temperate at least, before it has attained to that degree of confidence, to which its progress will conduct you, every thing appears serious: the hope of the least favour is a crime: one does not permit themselves the most innocent freedoms without trembling. At first one solicits nothing, or so small a matter, that a woman thinks in justice, she should accord it to you, in consideration of your extreme modesty: to obtain this trifle, one promises never to require more: yet, in the instant of making such protestations, they are insensibly gaining ground, and becoming more familiar: she permits this idle dalliance, as of so little consequence, that she would suffer it in almost

almost any man of her intimate acquaintance.

But at length, what seemed to be of small import to-day, upon comparison with what passed yesterday, would appear very considerable, when compared to the liberties that were at first permitted. A woman rendered confident, by your discretion, cannot easily perceive the insensible gradation of her own weakness. She is so self-sufficient, and the slight favours solicited for the present, appear so easy to be refused, that she too hastily concludes the same strength will remain when any thing of more consequence shall be attempted. I have not yet sufficiently expressed myself—she even flatters herself that her resistance will increase in proportion to the importance of the favours required.

Women have often such a reliance on their virtue, that they sometimes provoke
danger,

danger, by daring it: they essay their strength, and have a curiosity to try how far a few slight freedoms are able to carry them. How imprudent to accustom their minds to such ideas as are capable of undoing them in the end! What way do they often make, before they discover they have stirred out of the spot? And if upon reflection, they are themselves surprized at having yielded so far, the lover is sometimes, no less so, at having obtained so much.

I may carry this matter further; for I am convinced from many instances, that a woman may sometimes be overcome, even without love or loose desire. I knew a lady once, who though perfectly amiable, had never shewn the least turn or disposition toward galantry. Fifteen years marriage had not in the least, abated her fondness for her husband, and this mutual affection was become a proverb among their acquaintance.

One

One evening at their country-house, some friends staid so late, that they were obliged to lye there. In the morning her maids were employed in attendance on the several ladies in their bed-chambers, and she was left alone in her dressing-room. A gentleman who was intimate in the family, and whom she had always looked upon as a person of no manner of consequence, happened to call into the room, to pay her the compliments of the morning.

He assisted her in little offices at the toilette: the deshabille in which he found her, naturally afforded him an occasion of paying some galant compliments upon her charms remaining still unimpaired; which she passed off with a smile, as meer words of courtesy. From one gay subject to another; from beauty to love, to gallantry: they toyed, they romped, they struggled: some slight attempt, at first neither premeditated on one side, nor apprehended on the other, became at last, a decisive event.

vent. She was *taken by surprize*, before she found herself *besieged*.

What must have been the astonishment of each, upon such an unforeseen adventure! they have neither of them since, been able to account for it how they could have been both hurried so far on the instant, without having had the least thought, inclination, or design, toward an amour, the very moment, or indeed any moment of their lives before.

Here we may cry out, "Vain mortals, who put such confidence in your virtue: whatever resolution ye may boast, know that there are *unlucky minutes*, when the most chaste may become most frail! The reason of which extraordinary crisis is, that nature never sleeps, and always labours to carry its point. Appetite is part of our substance: virtue is only a piece of *inlaid-work*, which requires an equal

“equal temperature to prevent from
“warping.”

The discourse that the charming Countess held with you then, might be really sincere — Though upon such occasions, women are apt to exaggerate a little—but she deceives herself, if she imagines she will be able to persevere to the end, in such strict and *supersine* sentiments. Be assured, that such *metaphysicians* differ not in the mean, from the rest of their sex. Their outward appearances are more plausible, and their moral more austere; but examine their actions, and you’ll find that their engagements always conclude after the same manner as theirs who do not pretend to very elevated affections. They set up a sort of heresy for themselves, and as I said, one day, to the Queen of Sweden, “these are your *Jansenists* in love.”^h

^h The Jansenists are a reformed sect in France, that sets up for purer doctrines than the rest of the Roman Catholics.

VOL. I.

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You

You fought then, Marquis, to know how to rate whatever women say to you upon the subject of galantry. All these fine systems which they make so pompous a display of, are but airy phantoms, they would amuse those who are easily imposed upon. To a man of any understanding, this heap of studied phrases is a mere parade, which he makes a jest of, and never hinders him from penetrating their real sentiments.

The hard things they say of love; the resistance they oppose to it; the little inclination they affect for its pleasures; the cautious measures they seem to take against the passion; the apprehensions they express about it—All these, do they not proceed from love alone? This is to render him homage after their manner: it is to be entirely occupied about him. He knows how to vary his form with them: like pride, he rises from his own defeat, and

and appears to be conquered, only to fix his empire more sure.

My stars ! what a letter is here ! But to excuse the length of it, would be to make it longer.

Adieu.

WHEN the reader has finished the above letter, he may almost imagine I had not seen it 'till it presented itself in the order of this translation. For certainly, he will have good reason to say, that the inserting it in my preface, might have saved me the expence of any farther apology for publishing this collection. Could the best moralist, or severest prude, point out the folly of confidence, or the hazard of dalliance, in a stronger manner than L'Enclos has done in this writing? This is the free-est letter in the whole *set*; and yet, is there scarce a paragraph in it that might not supply a thesis for a boarding-school lecture?

LETTER

L E T T E R XI.

I AM pleased with your letter, Marquis : would you know why ? It affords me a speaking proof of the truths I have been instructing you in, for some time past. I find you have, at length, relinquished your metaphysics, and speak of the charms of your Countess, with a certain warmth that betrays your sentiments to be not quite so refined as you would have me believe, nor as perhaps you really imagined them yourself.

Tell me honestly, if love was not an effect of our senses, would you with so much pleasure contemplate that mien, those eyes, those teeth, those lips, you describe in so enraptured a strain ? If the qualities of her mind and understanding only, had made the conquest of your heart, a woman of fifty years of age, perhaps, would have served better for this purpose,

than the Countess. You see such a one every day: 'tis her mother. Prithee, why don't you fall in love with her? Why do you neglect an hundred women of her age, of her homeliness, and her *merit*, who make advances to you, and would play the same formal part with you, that you perform before the Countess?

Besides, why do you desire with so much earnestness, to be distinguished by her from any other man? Why so uneasy whenever she shews the least manner of civility to any one else? Her esteem for others, would it diminish that which she may have conceived for you? Are there jealousies, are there rivalships in metaphysics? None, that ever I heard of. I have friends myself, and I am not in the least uneasy when they pay their addresses to any other woman.

Friendship is a sentiment that has no dependence on the senses: the soul alone receives

ceives the impression, and the mind loses nothing of its value, by yielding itself to several at the same time. Make a comparison, between this and love, and you will quickly perceive the difference between a lover and a friend. You will then acknowledge, that I am not, after all, so absurd as you thought me at first, and that you cannot yourself boast a heart less vulgar than the generality of plain, honest sort of people, whom you have been pleased to censure for their want of delicacy in this point.

I would not, however, bring the charge against men only : I am frank, and am very certain, that if women would be ingenuous, they might likewise confess, that they are not themselves, in any sort more *seraphic*, in this particular. If they imagined nothing more in love than the pleasures of intellect, and hoped to please by sense and character alone, why endeavour with such assiduous pains to charm by the

beauty and ornament of their face and persons? What have a fine complexion, an elegant form, a graceful fall in the shoulders, to do with the soul? What a contradiction here, between their real sentiments, and those they affect to make parade of! *See them*, and you will be convinced that their whole design is to be admired for their outward attractions; making very little account of any thing further. *Hear them*, and they would impose on your belief, that their form and features are things which they hold in the slightest esteem.

But I am, perhaps, too officious in endeavouring to dissipate your error in this matter. Might I not leave it to their own industry to clear up this point to you? They would very shortly, give you sufficient reason for changing your present sentiments, with regard to this particular.

I am to pass this evening with Madame
de

de Raymond, to hear the two Camus's, and Ytier, perform in concert together. Mesdames de la Sabliere, de Salins, and de Monforeau, with Madame de Fienne, are to be there. Will you neglect so agreeable a party?

L E T T E R XII.

TIS taking things most grievously to heart, Marquis! Two whole nights without closing your eyes; This is love with a vengeance! One can have no longer the least doubt upon that point. You have made your lips and eyes declare your passion in the most explicit manner; and yet she has not condescended to yield the least attention to your unhappy state! Such injustice cries aloud for vengeance! Is it possible, that after eight days intire, of sighs and assiduities, she could be so hard-hearted as to refuse you even a glimpse of hope? 'Tis really what one

cannot have the least notion of. So long a resistance will never pass for an historical fact. The Countess is an heroine in romance: But, if you begin to lose patience already, consider what you might have still to suffer, if you had continued your former refined sentiments — You have gained more ground already, in those same eight days you complain of, than the *late Celadon* would have done, in as many months.

But, to speak seriously to you: is there any manner of justice now, in your complaints? You stile the Countess ungrateful, insensible, scornful, &c. But prithee, tell me what right you have to charge her so severely? Will you pay no sort of attention to what I have so often repeated to you? Love is a very caprice, involuntary in the person whose heart is affected by it. Now answer me, why should you think one is obliged to any kind of gratitude, for a blind sentiment that

that has happened to seize you, without your own choice, or their concurrence? There is something singular in you men! you resent it as an offence, if women do not return immediately the fond regards you *condescend* to bestow upon them: your revolted pride accuses them at once, of injustice, as if it were their fault that your heads were turned; and that they were under a sort of moral obligation of being seized, at a certain given time, with the same disorder that you yourselves happened to be afflicted with.

Is the Countess, I pray you, answerable for it, if her brain does not feel itself affected, at the same instant you begin to rave? Cease then, either to accuse her, or lament yourself. Endeavour to communicate your own malady to her. I know you very well: you are engaging enough—perhaps, she may too soon for her repose, conceive such sentiments towards

you, as you could wish. Finally, I think that she has every quality necessary to make an intire conquest of your heart, and to inspire you with such a taste, as may be requisite to render you happy.

I do not imagine her capable of a ferious attachment. Lively, careless, pre-emptory, and capricious, she will probably afford you a good deal of work on your hands. A woman of an attentive, fond disposition, would suffer you to fall asleep. You must be treated with military discipline, to rouse and preserve you in a proper state of life. Let a mistress once play the part of a lover, and she will soon find herself neglected—perhaps worse—The subject rises to a tyrant—treats her with a kind of carelessness, or contempt, which leads finally, to inconstancy, and disgust.

You have then, luckily met with every thing you wanted, in the charming fair who causes your present most dolorous martyr-

martyrdom. The poor Marquis! What a siege of troubles lie before him! How many squabbles do I foresee! What piques, what resolves to quit her! But remember well, that all these difficulties will become a real torment, while you continue to treat love like an hero of romance, and that they will be rather the *seasonings* of your pleasures, if you conduct yourself like a rational creature.

Should I not cease from writing to you? The moments that you lose in reading my letters, are they not so many *petty larcenies* in love? What an entertainment would it afford me to be a witness of your situation! In reality, for an unconcerned spectator, can there be a more amusing object in the world, than the emotions of a man in love?

Farewel.

L E T T E R XIII.

YOU seem to resent it, Marquis, that I should treat the situation you are
in

in after so ludicrous a manner: you would have me consider your present circumstances as a very serious business; but I cannot assume so much gravity all on the sudden. Don't you observe, that my way of dealing with you is agreeable to the principles I had before laid down? I speak lightly of a matter, which I esteem a trifle, or a meer amusement: when we are upon a business of consequence to your real happiness, you shall find me then assume a character proper for the occasion.

I have not, in truth, the least kind of pity for you, because I do not perceive any thing in your case which need move compassion. With a proper philosophy in this matter, what appears to you a pain, would become a pleasure. If you would succeed, use my prescriptions, and I warrant their effect. Let us proceed now to the second article of your letter.

You are the more surprized, you say,
at

at the coldness and reserve of the Countess, as you do not believe them sincere: If I understand you, this conjecture is framed from the indiscretion of her friends. The advantageous things you hear she has said of you, even gave rise to the first sentiments you conceived for her. This stroke is extremely like you men. The least favourable word that escapes a woman, immediately inclines them to believe she has some design or other upon them. They attribute this conquest at once, to their own merit: vanity turns the slightest food to nourishment. If one was to examine ye closely, they would find that ye frequently love out of gratitude: and women in their turn, are not much wiser in this particular. So that galantry is a kind of commerce, where we would, each of us, have the other party advance to us; and love to think ourselves in each others debt: and you know that true spirit is always more ready to pay, than bestow.

However,

However, are we not apt to impose upon ourselves sometimes? How often does it appear that persons who imagine they are but discharging an obligation, are in reality, making the first advances? If two lovers would sincerely explain themselves upon the rise and progress of their passion, what curious kind of confessions should we have! Attend.

Eliza, to whom Valerio happened to address a meer compliment of course, returned it perhaps undesignedly, with a look and manner as if it had wrought a greater effect upon her mind than such common-place civilities usually do. This was enough: Valerio quickly changes his note: his general complaisance resolves itself at once, into particular regards: their mutual warmth insensibly increases, the fire is lighted, it blazes out, and behold a passion in form.]

Now, if any one should tell Eliza, that she

she had commenced this amour, that she had herself made the first advance, nothing could appear to her more unjust; and yet nothing is more true, at the same time.

I conclude from hence, that in a proper sense, love is less the effect of that invincible sympathy so often pleaded, than of our own vanity. Observe the rise of all such attachments, and you'll find them proceed from the mutual praises we bestow upon each other. It has been said, that folly is the source of love.—But, give me leave to assure you, it is flattery; and that there is no inspiring the heart of a fine woman with this passion, 'till you have first paid your tribute to her vanity.

To all which you may add, that the strong inclination we naturally have to love, is the reason also, of some illusion in this case. As *enthusiasts* by the sole force of imagination, fancy they see in reality, those objects toward which their superstition

tion is attracted; in like manner, we persuade our minds frequently, into a belief of those sentiments in others, which we would wish to inspire them with ourselves.

Have a care, then, Marquis, not to impose upon yourself by wrong conceptions. The Countess might have spoken favourably of you, solely with the innocent design of rendering justice to your merit, without any farther view; and you may, perhaps, be returning her an act of injustice, by suspecting her of insincerity with regard to her present conduct toward you.

But after all, why should you not permit her to dissemble her inclinations in your favour, if you have really inspired her with any? Have not women a *prescriptive* right for concealing their sentiments from men? And does not the ungenerous advantages they are too apt to take

take of their fondness for them, sufficiently justify such a conduct?

Adieu.

LETTER XIV.

NO, Marquis — the curiosity of Madame de Sevigné^a has not given me any manner of offence. On the contrary, I am very well satisfied that she should see every letter I write to you. She was certainly of opinion before, that if my correspondence was upon the subject of gallantry, it must have been intirely upon my account. But she has now found out her mistake. She may perceive by this instance, that I am not so high as she imagined; and I believe her to be ingenuous enough to conceive for the future, a different idea of Ninon than she has had for some time past.

However that may be, her injustice shall have no sort of influence upon my friend-

^a His Mother.

ship

ship for you. I am philosopher enough not to be uneasy about the opinions of those who take the liberty to judge of, without knowing me. Whatever may happen, I shall continue to write to you with my usual frankness; and am persuaded that Madame de Sevigné, notwithstanding her extreme delicacy, will be upon the whole, more often of my opinions, than she will have sincerity enough to acknowledge.

I come now, to what relates personally to yourself. Well, Marquis, after a world of pains and assiduities, you think at last, that you have been able to soften this heart of adamant.—I am really transported at your success. But cannot help smiling to find you interpret the sentiments of the Countess, after the manner you do. You partake with the rest of your sex, an error which it may be necessary to undeceive you from, however flattering it may be in the contemplation.

Ye

Ye conclude, one and all of ye, that your peculiar merits alone inspire this passion in our hearts, and that your superior qualities of mind and understanding are the sole causes of the love we conceive for you. What a mistake is here! But vanity is answerable for it all. Examine without prepossession, if possible, what is the real motive that determines yourselves in such engagements, and you will be soon convinced that you deceive yourself, that we impose upon you also, that all things properly considered, you are the dupes of your own self-sufficiency, as well as of ours; and that the merits of the beloved object are nothing more than the *occasion*, or *pretence* of love, and not its *efficient cause*. In short, that all this sublime theory, generally pleaded on the part of either, must ultimately be referred to the natural instinct which I formerly proposed, as the *first mover* in this passion.

I have told you indeed a harsh and mortifying

tifying truth, but it is not the less certain for its severity. Women enter into life with this inclination undetermined; and if they chuse one man in preference to another, let them honestly confess that they yield less to a knowledge of his merit, than to a certain blind and mechanical impulse.

Need there be a stronger proof of this matter, than those indiscreet passions we are sometimes bewitched with, for persons absolutely unknown to us; or at least, for men whom we are not sufficiently acquainted with, to be proper judges of their merits; and where, if we hit right, must be the sole effect of hazard. We generally attach our affections, without any sort of precaution; and it was a true parallel to compare love to an appetite, which one is frequently sensible of for one sort of food rather than another, without being able to account for such a preference.

It is very cruel in me to dissipate the
chi-

chimera's of your vanity ; but the truth will out. You are flattered with being loved, because you imagine it supposes some considerable merit in the object beloved. But you compliment this passion too much, I assure you ; or rather, you have too good an opinion of yourselves. Believe me, it is not for your sakes that we are fond of you : to be sincere in love, we solicit only our own pleasure. Caprice, interest, vanity, constitution, or the getting rid of that *weariness* which oppresses us while the heart remains void of attachment:—Some one, or more, of these mean principles, are the source of all those elevated sentiments we are so apt to deify.

In truth, they are not your most heroic qualities which engage our affections ; if they happen to enter into account among the reasons that determine us in your favour, it is not the heart which receives the impression, but our pride ; and the greatest
part

part of those things that render you agreeable to us, properly rated, would render you despicable, or ridiculous perhaps, in another place.

Thus it is. We are fond of an admirer who will entertain us with the idea of our own excellence; we need some submissive subject to exercise dominion over; or, to speak more plainly, our minds may have conceived a turn for galantry. Chance presents us with one lover, instead of another: we accept, rather than chuse him. You fancy yourselves the object of disinterested affections: you imagine that women love you for your sakes alone.—Silly dupes! you are but the minister of their pleasures, or the slave of their caprices.

But, to do them justice, they are themselves, to the full as ignorant in this matter. The truths I here reveal, have no more enlightened their understanding, than they have yours. On the contrary, with
all

all possible ingenuouſneſs they really imagine themſelves determined and governed intirely, by thoſe ſublime notions that both your vanity and their own have equally inſpired ye with ; and it would be, therefore, the height of injuſtice to tax them with any manner of inſincerity, in this particular : for, without the leaſt conſciouſneſs of the matter, they firſt deceive themſelves, and then impoſe on you.

You ſee, Marquis, that I here betray to you the ſecrets of the *Bona Dea* ; judge of my friendship, when I endeavour to inſtruct you, at the expence of my own ſex. The more you comprehend the nature of women, the fewer follies you will be led into on their Accounts.

Adieu.

LETTER XV.

TRULY, Marquis, I am surprized how you can support the severe manner in which I reason with you sometimes. I seem to have no other view but to chase away agreeable *illusions*, and substitute mortifying *realities* in their stead. I should certainly endeavour to break myself of my usual way of philosophising upon every occasion. I am as sensible as any one can be, that one pleases more by flattering deceits, than by the soundest logic. But my character forces its way in spite of me. Nay, I perceive, even at this instant, an auxiliary of philosophy marching up to augment my forces, and you must collect all yours, to withstand the *broad-side* of moral we are preparing to salute you with. When this is over, I may promise you some relaxation. I have laid your letter before me, and shall return you a full answer to it.

No

No sir—I will not abate one tittle of it.
 —You may dispute with me as long as you please, upon the slight opinion I seem to have of my own sex.—Is it my fault, I pray you, if they supply me with mortifying truths to relate? Besides, Marquis, don't you know, that the person in the world who thinks worse of a woman, is—a woman?

However, to justify myself seriously, from the notion you have conceived of my opinions, I must assure you, that I am neither envious, nor unjust. If I named my own sex in my last letter, rather than yours, do not imagine it was in order to censure them in particular. I only meant to shew you, that without being more to blame than men, they are, however, more dangerous; because they are better accustomed to conceal their real sentiments. In short, you confess, sooner than they can be brought to do; what is your principal object in love.

Notwithstanding, when they assure you, as I said before, that their choice has no other than a knowledge and approbation of your sense and merits, I am persuaded that they think themselves sincere. I even make no doubt, but that when they happen to perceive the least indelicacy in their minds upon this subject, they exert their whole sophistry to disguise it from themselves. But the motives I have hinted to you, exist nevertheless in the bottom of their hearts: they are not less the true causes of their attachment toward you; and whatever effort they may make, to flatter themselves that they are determined by meer spiritual reasons, their vanity in this particular has not the power of altering the real nature of things. They endeavour to conceal their disgrace in this point, as they would take care to hide bad teeth, which disfigure a set of features, otherwise perfect enough. Even when they are alone, they are afraid to open their

their mouths ; and the habit of disguising this blemish from others, and themselves, brings them at length to forget it intirely, or to pass it by, as a matter of no consequence.

In truth, I agree with you, that both one and the other of us would be considerable losers, should we affect to shew ourselves to each other, as we are really in nature. The world have agreed to act a farce together, and to exhibit *ourselves*, would be to quit the actor, and substitute the genuine character, instead of the *dramatis personæ*. Let us then revel in the enchantment, without striving to investigate the spell that charms and bewitches us. To anatomize love, is to annihilate it. *Psyche* lost it by her curiosity. I take this fable to be a lesson against analizing our pleasures.

Let me stand corrected thus far ; that if I said it was a mistake in you, to be

vain upon our preference, and that ye have not much to boast of from the motives which determine us in your favour, I have to add here, that we are ourselves as much deceived, if we imagine those sublime conceits you stuff your amorous vows with, are produced by the influence of our charms, or the impresson of our merit.

How often do we find that men who accost women with the most respectable air, who display such delicate sentiments, so flattering to their vanity, before them; in a word, who appear to breathe only through them, to live for them alone, and to form no other desire but for their honour and happiness: how often, I say, are such men guided by motives the very reverse of all these pompous notions. Read and study the hearts of these *good creatures*, and you shall find in the breast of one, instead of that disinterested passion he is professing, but gross desire: in another, a vanity about an alliance with your family,

family, or an avarice for your fortune: and a third may be determined by reasons even still more mortifying; to raise perhaps, the jealousy of some other woman whom he loves better, seeming only attached to you, in order to render you a public sacrifice to your triumphant rival.

But in truth, the heart is an insoluble riddle—a strange compound of contradictions! We imagine, we know what passes there—we see the effect, quite ignorant of the cause. Let us favourably suppose that it even expresses its sentiments with sincerity; yet this very sincerity is not to be depended upon. Its motions may arise from springs quite different from those it may be immediately conscious of: and in truth, neither man nor woman really know what principle it is that governs or directs their tastes or passions.

But upon the whole, they have made the best of it: they explain every thing to
 M 4 their

their own advantage; supply the deficiency of genuine, by assumed merit, and accustom themselves, as I think I said before, to deify their vain imaginations. As all the world find their account in such deception, nobody sets about reforming it, nor even of examining whether it be an error, or no.

Farewel—if you pass this evening with me, you shall meet with company whose gaiety will make you amends for the seriousness of this lecture.

L E T T E R XVI.

CAN it be possible, Marquis? Does the Countess really continue inflexible still? The careless air with which she receives your addresses, declares an indifference that drives you to despair!

Perhaps I may be able to sift this enigma for you.—I know you well: you are
 gay,

gay, lively, and capable of appearing to advantage before women you have no manner of attachment to: but where your affections happen to be in the least engaged—I have remarked it—you immediately grow timorous. Such behaviour may perchance, win the heart of a country girl: one must use another sort of address with women of fashion.

The Countess knows the world—Take my advice: resign your sublime theorems and elevated sentiments to the *Celadons* of the age: leave them to spin out such subtle systems. I can assure you, on the part of women, that there are few among us that would not chuse to be rather briskly, than too gently dealt with. Men lose more women by their timidity, than virtue saves.

The more awe a lover betrays, the more he interests our pride to inspire him with it: the more apprehension he seems to have about our resistance, the more re-

spect we exact from him. If we were to speak our minds, we should cry out, "For pity sake, do not suppose us so inexorable! You lay us under the necessity of appearing so. Do not set our conquest at so high a rate: forbear to consider our defeat as an insuperable difficulty: accustom us by degrees to see you doubt our indifference: very often the surest means to be beloved, is to appear persuaded that one is already so."

An unreserved, careless manner of behaviour, sets our mind at ease. When we perceive a lover, though appearing satisfied of our regard, still continues to treat us with the respect our vanity requires, we are apt to draw a hasty conclusion that he will behave in the same manner after we have given him more certain proofs of our affection.

What

What confidence does not this inspire us with? What progress may he not flatter himself to make? But, should he afford us the least hint to keep upon our guard, it is not then our hearts we have to defend, it is not our virtue you have then to combat—'Tis our pride—and this, believe me, is the greatest enemy you have to conquer, in women.

In short, we endeavour to hide it even from ourselves, that we have permitted you to address us. Leave it in a woman's power to equivocate with herself, suffer her to pretend that she has yielded to a sort of violence or surprize, let her perceive your esteem to keep equal pace with your love, and I will answer to you for her heart.

Treat the Countess according to her own character. She is full of gaiety and mirth, and one must in some sort, play the fool to win her. Let her not even perceive that she distinguishes you from other

men ; be always chearful as she is lively, and you will fix your empire in her heart, before you warn her of your design. She will love you for some time, without perceiving it herself, and will at once be surprized to find how far her passion has advanced, without her being sensible even of its first movement.

Adieu.

L E T T E R XVII.

YOU will probably, think me more inhuman even than the Countess. She is the author indeed, of all your misery ; but I carry my cruelty farther, by sporting with your distress. Oh, how I sympathize in your griefs ! No person can be more interested in them, and your situation appears most lamentable to me ! For how can one make an explicit declaration of love to a woman who seems to take a malicious pleasure in evading every
 oppor-

opportunity of the kind? Sometimes she appears moved with compassion: and at others, quite inattentive to every thing you do to please her. She listens readily, and replies with chearfulness to the compliments and gay address of a certain Chevalier, who is but a *petit-maitre* in galantry; while to you she answers seriously, or with an absent air. If you speak to her in a tender and affecting stile, she passes you off after some slight manner, or immediately changes the discourse. All which inquiet, intimidates, and drives you to despair.

The poor Marquis! But I do most assuredly promise you, that all this betokens a true and real passion. The absent manner she affects before you, and the heedless air with which she distinguishes her sentiments, ought to convince you, that in effect, she is very far from being indifferent.

But

But your want of courage, the consequences she apprehends from such a passion as yours, the sympathy she already feels, with your situation, all these alarm her: and 'tis you in reality, that fetter and constrain her behaviour. A little more resolution on your part, would soon set ye both at liberty. Remember what Monsieur de la Rochefaucault said to you lately; "A man of sense may be in love, like a madman, but ought never, nor can be so like a fool."

In fine, when you draw a comparison between your respect, your esteem, and the free, nay rather too familiar manners of the Chevalier—when you frame a conclusion that you ought to have the preference upon this account; you are not aware, with how little justness you reason, in this particular. The Chevalier is merely galant.—All he says is of no manner of consequence, and passes but as words of course. Vanity alone, and a habit of pay-
ing

ing compliments to every woman he meets, make up the whole of his character. Love goes for nothing, or but a very trifle in all his attachments. Like the butterfly, he rests upon each flower but for an instant. A slight amusement is all his object. So light a character is not capable of alarming a woman. The Countess perceives with pleasure, how little danger there can be in receiving the addresses of such a galant as this: she knows perfectly well, how to rate the regards of the Chevalier: and to say all in a word, she considers him as a person whose heart is intirely exhausted. There is no woman, let her metaphysical notions be ever so pure, but knows very well how to make a difference between a lover of this sort, and such a one as you are.

Therefore, you will appear more formidable, and will be really more to be feared, from the manner in which you conduct yourself. You boast your respect
and

and esteem—But I answer, you have neither one or the other; and the Countess is very sensible of this herself.^b Nothing has a purpose less respectful than such a passion as yours. Very different from the Chevalier, you exact acknowledgements, preferences, returns, nay sacrifices—all which the Countess preceives at one view. Or at least, if under the cloud that envelopes you at present, she cannot distinguish these pretensions so clearly, nature has given her certain præsentiments of what it may cost her, should she indulge you in the least opportunity of instructing her in a passion, which perhaps she partakes with you already.

Women seldom examine closely, the reasons which determine them either to

^b Men sometimes mistake timidity for respect, and passion for esteem. A little experience undeceives them, and the error is not of much consequence. But 'tis too probable that many women have been undone, by not being aware of this distinction.

resist

resist or yield. They do not trouble themselves with investigating or defining them. But they have a sort of sensibility about the matter, and their sentiment is just. It serves them in the place of knowledge and reflection. It is a kind of instinct, which directs them often upon difficult occasions, and conducts them perhaps, as safely as the most enlightened reason could do.*

Your charming Adelaïde^d would then play the *incognito* upon you, as long as she

* When philosophers find their investigation at a stand, they screen their ignorance by attributing the unaccountable effect to some *occult quality*. Here Ninon stiles the principle that guides us, *sensibility*, *instinct*, *a je ne sçai quoi*, seeming at a loss to define it. I am afraid the unhappy woman lived and died in this ignorance. This *sensibility*, this *instinct* then, is modesty; which like a guardian angel, directs and governs us, without the help of reason or moral, and safer too—Those require reflection—this prevents even thought.

^d This alludes to a character in an Italian novel. could.

could. This scheme is very conformable to her real interests; and yet, I am persuaded that it is not the result of any reflection; nor does she perceive, on the other hand, that a passion outwardly restrained, makes but the stronger impression and greater progress within. Supply it then with fuel, and give that fire, she endeavours to smother, time to inflame the heart in which she strives to conceal it. *

Upon the whole, Marquis, you must be of opinion with me that you have been mistaken in two material points relative to this business. You imagined that you had more respect for the Countess, than the Chevalier had. But you will find that his addressees have no material

* The French words are, *Laissez lui donc, jeter de profondes racines, & donnez à ce feu, &c.* Here is a confusion of metaphor. This passion is first, compared to a tree; and then, to fire. I have taken the liberty of preserving an uniformity of simile, by sticking to the latter allusion, throughout the sentence.

design,

design, while yours aim directly at her heart. Again, you apprehended that the absent, indifferent and inattentive air with which she received your devoirs, were proofs or presages of your misfortune. Undeceive yourself, for there cannot be a more certain sign of a passion, than the efforts one makes to disguise it. In a word, whenever the Countess begins to treat you with the least indulgence, while you continue to give tokens of your attachment to her—when she perceives you, without resentment, ready to make an explicit declaration of your fond sentiments towards her—I promise you her heart then is yours, and you may rejoice in a reciprocal passion.

Stay a few words more. I had forgot to take notice of one particular in your letter, which related to myself. Yes Marquis, I have constantly pursued the method I had at first prescribed to myself, in the beginning of this correspondence.

There

There are few subjects in my letters, that I have not made topics of conversation in my little society. I very seldom propose any opinions of consequence to you, 'till after I have collected suffrages upon the justness of them. Sometimes I consult la Bruyere; sometimes, St. Evremond: at other times, the Abbé Chateaufort, &c. You ought to admire my ingenuousness—Few people are ready to acknowledge the helps they borrow in writing—but I confess freely, that you are chiefly indebted to the company I generally converse with.

A propos—since we are speaking of men of distinguished merit, Monsieur de la Rochefaucault has just sent a desire, I would name a day to go see him. I have fixed on to-morrow, and I expect you will meet me there. You know well the affection he has for you.

Adieu.

LETTER

LETTER XVIII.

I HAVE made some new reflections, Marquis, upon the situation you are in, and the embarrassment you seem to labour under at present. But after all, prithee what necessity for making a declaration of love in form? Is it, because you have read in romances that they proceeded as methodically in galantry, as in a court of justice? This is too formal a process, believe me. Suffer, as I said before, the flame to light up itself, and acquire new force; and you will find, without having in terms expressed your passion, you will be advanced farther than if you had made one of those express declarations at which our grand-dames say, women should be so much alarmed.

A confession, absolutely unnecessary in itself, and which generally casts a cloud over an amour for some time—it suspends
its

its progress.—Take my word for it, Marquis, a woman persuades herself she is beloved, much better by what she herself observes, than by any thing the lover can say to her.

Behave yourself as if you had already made the declaration you are in so much pain about: attend to the Chevalier, imitate his careless manner. Her behaviour toward him methinks, seems to prescribe a rule of conduct to you. With your overstrained respect, and circumspect air, you appear a person who has some deep design in contemplation: one who is going to attempt some desperate stroke. Your whole deportment must necessarily alarm a woman who knows the consequences of such a passion as yours. Be assured, that while you suffer her to perceive your preparations for an attack, you will always find her *under arms*.

Have you ever known an experienced general, when he had formed the design of
surpri-

surprizing a town, make known to the enemy by his motions, upon which side he meant the assault? In love, as in war, is the conqueror ever called to account whether he owes his success to force or address? He has vanquished—he receives the laurel—his hopes are accomplished—he is happy. Follow his example, and you may obtain the same fortune. Conceal your march, disguise your designs, 'till opposition is vain; 'till battle is joined, and victory secured, before you have denounced war. In a word, imitate those heroes whose enterprizes are only known by the happy event that attends them.

LETTER XIX.

AT length, Marquis, she has heard you, without resentment, declare your passion to her, and vow by all that lovers hold most sacred, that you will worship her eternally. Will you believe my prophecy another time? However,
she

she would treat you with less reserve, she pretends, if you would be a reasonable person, and limit your sentiments within the bounds of simple friendship: the very name of lover, shocks the Countess. Prithce do not differ with her about titles, provided in the main, that the matter is the same: and follow the advice that Monsieur de la Sabliere gives you in the following stanza:

Belinda will not yield to love,
But wishes for a friend sincere,
Whose tender conduct still should prove
His fond regard and anxious care:
And also should esteem her fair.

Lovers with caution urge your claim,
She only hates of Love—*The Name.*

But she distracts you with injurious suspicions about your sincerity and constancy: she refuses to believe you, because most men are false and perjured: she refrains from loving you, because they
are

are generally inconstant. How happy are you, and how little does the Countess know her own heart, if she thinks that this is the way to shew you her indifference ! Shall I give you the import of her conversation with you ? She is touched with the passion you express toward her ; but the complaints and misfortunes of her friends have made her apprehend that the protestations of lovers are generally false.

I think, however, that there is some injustice in this censure ; for I, who am not apt to flatter ye, am really persuaded that they are almost all sincere, upon these occasions. They become enamoured of a mistress, that is, they feel a strong desire to possess her charms. The fond idea which their imaginations form of this enjoyment, deceives them into a warm opinion, that the pleasures they have attached to it, will only end with life. They never once dream that the fire which inflames

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their

their hearts, shall sooner or later abate its fervour ; languish, and become finally extinct.

This, though so certain an event, appears to them, at that time, beyond all possibility : therefore, they really swear eternal constancy to us, with all the ingenuousness imaginable ; and to suspect them, would be a mortal injury to their veracity. But—the *poor ignorants* promise more than they are capable of performing—not being aware that their hearts are formed of a substance solid enough to retain always the same impression.

They cease to love, without knowing why—they even feel a kind of scruple, when they first begin to cool—they go on protesting yet, after their passion is extinct—they still *hold the course*, 'till after having jaded themselves in vain, they submit to indifference or disgust, and become
inconstant

inconstant with the same sincerity, as when they made eternal vows to the contrary.^f

Nothing is more natural than all this. The emotion that a growing passion had excited in their breasts, conjured up the spell that deceived them. The charm is dissolved—the passion has subsided. What crime can be imputed to the lover upon this account? He actually imagined he could for ever preserve his constancy, at the time of his protestation.—And, perhaps, women may as frequently rejoice at this infidelity, because it eases them of a restraint over the fickleness of their own dispositions.

But to return.—The Countess charges you with the inconstancy of your sex; she fears you may become faithless, like the

^f Whatever woman can ever pretend to be deceived, after the *too true* philosophy set forth in this letter?

generality of lovers : ready to yield upon plausible assurances, she even solicits you for arguments to strengthen her opinion of your sincerity. The passion, then, you profess toward her, does not in the least offend her. Offend her ! it transports her. It flatters her so charmingly, that her sole uneasiness is, lest it should not be sincere. Dissipate her fears ; make her believe the happiness you proffer, and which she already knows how to prize, is not ideal, but a real bliss. Proceed farther, and try to persuade her that it will not end 'till life itself shall cease. Her resistance grows faint, her doubts resolved, and with what willing assent does she yield to the slightest arguments tending to remove her suspicions and disquiets !

Women are much mistaken, if by their doubts with regard to the sincerity and constancy of men, they mean to declare their indifference or avoidance of the pleasures of love. When they express their fears

lest

lest the happiness itself may fall short of expectation, or that your inconstancy may render it so, do they not already betray a fond presentiment, and may not all their alarms be reduced to one only, that of being too soon deprived of their imagined *Elysium*? Hesitating between this fear, and a strong passion for pleasure, they become apprehensive, even from the imperfect view they have then of it, that they may perhaps be too sensibly affected at its loss.

In fine, Marquis, you may suppose that every woman, who speaks to you in the stile of the Countess, addresses you after this manner: “I have a very high
 “notion of the pleasures of love: the idea
 “I have framed of them, is the most bewitching thing in the world: you may
 “rest assured then, that I am as little indifferent to the enjoyment of them,
 “as you yourself can be. But—the

“ more my mind is transported with
 “ this idea, the greater my dread is, lest
 “ it should all prove a fond *chimera*; and I
 “ only decline this happiness, from an ap-
 “ prehension of seeing it terminate too
 “ soon. Could I have any tolerable secu-
 “ rity that it would be permanent, how
 “ feeble would my resistance be! But
 “ will you not abuse my credulity? May
 “ I not be one day punished for my too
 “ great confidence in you? Alas, how
 “ soon may that day arrive! O! if I
 “ could hope to enjoy, even for any rea-
 “ sonable time, the social pleasures of a
 “ mutual passion, all farther dispute upon
 “ this subject, should be immediately at
 “ an end.”

LETTER

LETTER XX.

THE rival they have given you, appears to me vastly formidable, from his being just such a person as I advised you to be. I know the Chevalier. There is no one more capable of that address which draws in the unexperienced. I'll hold a wager that his heart has not yet received the least scar. He attacks the Countess in cold blood. You are a lost man. A lover, as much enamoured as you appear to be, commits a thousand oversights: the best concerted schemes miscarry in his hands: every moment he gives advantage against himself: such is his misfortune, that precipitation and timidity ruin him by turns: he loses a thousand of those little opportunities which always gain some ground.

On the contrary—A man who makes love for amusement only, profits himself
of

of the slightest occasions : nothing escapes him : he observes the progress he makes : he watches all unguarded moments, and turns them to his own account : every thing conspires to aid his wishes : his very indiscretions are often the effect of deliberation, and advance his success : 'till at length, he acquires such a superiority, that he may almost name the day of his triumph.

Beware, Marquis, of pressing on too fast : do not betray passion enough to make the Countess depend too much on the excess of your fondness : let her feel some inquietude in her turn : oblige her to take some pains on her part, to secure her conquest, from the alarm you should purposely give her of losing it. Women never treat ye so cavalierly, as when they think ye too far engaged to quit them. Their virtue, less than their pride, renders them intractable. Like merchants, before whom you shew too great a liking to their
goods,

goods, they rise upon you with as little conscience.

Moderate then your imprudent earnestness.—Shew less of love, and you will excite the more. We never set so high a value upon any good, as in the moment we fear to lose it. A little policy in love is absolutely necessary to the happiness of both. I might proceed farther, and advise you even to employ a little artifice. Upon all other occasions, 'tis certainly better, rather to be the dupe, than the knave. But in galantry, fools only are the dupes, and the knaves have always the laughers on their side.

I was going to take my leave, but cannot find in my heart to quit you, without affording you one word of consolation. I would not discourage you.—However formidable the Chevalier appears to be, you ought not to despair. I suspect that the
finesing

finessing Countess has brought him into play, meerly to raise your jealousy. I do not mean to compliment you, but have the pleasure to assure you, that you have infinitely more merit than he. You are young, just entering into life, and have not yet loved.—The Chevalier *has lived*.—Where is the woman insensible to this difference?

Adieu.

END OF VOL. I.

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